

NO. 22
MARCUS
MARIOTA

DOUBLE ISSUE

NO. 15
JAMEIS
WINSTON

2015 NFL DRAFT PREVIEW 5

THE ULTIMATE INSIDER'S GUIDE // 68 PAGES // THE TOP 300 PLAYERS

Sports Illustrated

JORDAN RULES

THE SPIETH ERA

BY ALAN SHIPNUCK / P. 42

BEGINS NOW

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT BECK

**FOR ALL THE PLACES
YOU ROAM.**



Best available fuel economy of any gas pickup – 27 MPG highway² • Available innovative GearOn™ adjustable cargo solution • Available 4G LTE Wi-Fi³ • Offering a best-in-class safety technology package⁴ • **YOU KNOW YOU WANT A TRUCK.**

**MOTOR
TREND
TRUCK
OF THE YEAR®
2015**



**ALL-NEW 2015 CHEVY COLORADO
STARTING AT \$20,995¹**

¹ MSRP. Tax, title, license, dealer fees and other optional equipment extra. ² EPA-estimated MPG city/highway; Colorado 2WD with 2.5L 4-cylinder and available automatic transmission 20/27. ³ Requires compatible mobile device, active OnStar service and data plan. Visit onstar.com for details and system limitations. ⁴ Available on LT only.



As shown \$32,135¹

FIND **NEW** ROADS[™]

CHEVROLET





BE PART OF THE PASSION.



Insurance coverages are underwritten by individual member companies of Zurich Insurance Group, including in the United States, Zurich American Insurance Company, 1400 American Lane, Schaumburg, Illinois 60196.



TUNE IN TO THE 2015 ZURICH CLASSIC

Thursday April 23 – Sunday April 26th

Broadcast Times:

Thursday & Friday

 Golf Channel, 3 – 6pm ET

 XM 146/Sirius 209, Noon – 6pm ET

Saturday & Sunday

 Golf Channel (lead-in coverage), 1 – 2:30pm ET

CBS, 3 – 6pm ET

 XM 146/Sirius 209, Noon – 6pm ET



Catch a memory you'll never release.

#FirstCatch

First of the day, first of the
season or first of a lifetime.
Follow @Take_Me_Fishing and
show us your **#FirstCatch**.



TAKEMEFISHING.org

Take Me Fishing presents *Recasting a Sports Star*

LONE STAR ANGLER

When he's not scorching the nets on the soccer pitch, Texas native Clint Dempsey loves his largemouth bass.

Soccer and fishing are similar in one major way: Goals and fish can be hard to find, and some days you will still get shut out. But Clint Dempsey knows that's not always the case. "Sometimes you just get lucky, man," he says.

Dempsey captained the U.S. men's national team at the 2014 World Cup in Brazil and shocked the world by scoring just 30 seconds into a huge victory over fierce rival Ghana, the fastest goal in U.S. World Cup history.

Dempsey spends his off-days out on the water, and he can strike just as quickly with a rod and reel as he does on the pitch. "Sometimes people say it's bad luck to catch on your first cast," he says. "I don't know, man. Any time you catch a fish, I think that's good luck! I'd rather have one fish than no fish—you don't want a goose egg for the day, that's for sure."

Dempsey grew up in Nacogdoches, Texas, honing his soccer skills on dirt fields and taking family camping trips to nearby Lake Sam Rayburn to fish. "We'd go fishing in the morning," says Dempsey, "and then we'd come

back, and in the evening we'd go fishing again. It was something to do with my dad and my brothers, and I just enjoyed spending time with them. That's how I fell in love with it."

His soccer talent eventually took him overseas to the English Premier League, where he became the most prolific American goal scorer in EPL history. The only downside: The EPL season overlapped with bass spawning season back home in Texas.

After all, Dempsey loves nothing more than pursuing largemouth bass. "Just because of the way they fight, jumping out of the water," he says. "Anything over 10 pounds is something you can put up on the wall and be proud of, and that's how I always looked at it—trying to catch that trophy bass."

Dempsey caught his during an EPL off-season five years ago, on July 4 at his hometown, Lake Nacogdoches. But he has fished far and wide thanks to his international career, and even spent his off-days at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa fishing the ponds near the USMNT hotel with his American teammates.

"Everyone was teasing me, saying,

"You ain't gonna catch nothing," Dempsey says. "Suddenly, I got this carp, and I'm reeling it in thinking, Man, this is the biggest fish of my life! But I'd foul-hooked him in the side—so I go down to pick him up and he slipped out of my hand and went back into the water. I couldn't show anyone this big carp that I caught!"

Now back in Major League Soccer, Dempsey stars for the Seattle Sounders. His off-seasons take place during the winter, which makes it tougher to find downtime and big fish.

Yet Dempsey knows how to be creative. Think of it as an extension of his goal-scoring skills. "It's a little tricky," he says. "But if you know what you're doing, you can still have real good days."

—Evan Scott Schwartz



TERRIFIC TACKLE:
Dempsey scores big
on Lake Auman near
his family home in
North Carolina.

©2015 Time Inc. Photo courtesy of Clint Dempsey

If you can use a hashtag,

you could win a boat.



Follow @Take_Me_Fishing
and use **#FirstCatchSweeps**
for a chance to win an
Evinrude® E-TEC® G2™ powered
Ranger® Bass Boat.



TAKEMEFISHING.org

takemefishing.org/firstcatch

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Sweepstakes starts 3/6/15 at 12:00 A.M. ET and ends 5/25/15 at 11:59:59 P.M. ET. Open only to eligible legal residents of the 48 US/DC, 18 years or older. Visit takemefishing.org for official rules and complete details, including entry instructions, odds of winning, prize details and restrictions, etc. Void in AK, HI, PR & where prohibited or restricted by law. Sponsor: Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation.

Here's to finding
everything left off the map.



THE OPEN WATER PADDLERS
6 YEARS AND STILL PADDLING



SUPERIOR
LIGHT BEER

ENJOY RESPONSIBLY

©2015 Anheuser-Busch, Michelob Ultra® Light Beer, St. Louis, MO 95 calories, 2.6g carbs, 0.6g protein and 0.0g fat, per 12 oz.

LINEUP

4.20-27.15

2015 | VOLUME 122 | NO. 16

Features

NFL

36

REX RYAN

Buffalo's new coach has brought new life to the Bills

By Jenny Vrentas

+

SUCCESS IS BREWING

Ryan held court with Buffalo fans at the Big Tree Inn.

THE MASTERS

42

Jordan Spieth

The face of golf's future is the world's oldest 21-year-old

By Alan Shipnuck

NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP

48

UConn Women

The Huskies' top dog reflects after winning his 10th title

By Geno Auriemma
As told to Richard Deitsch

Departments

8 SI Now

10 Inbox

12 Leading Off

19 Scorecard

28 Just My Type

Dan Patrick:
Sarah Thomas on what it takes to be an NFL official

30 Faces in The Crowd

128 Point After

Jimmy Rollins:
Honoring a Dodgers hero, as a Dodger

SI has regional covers this week:

Robert Beck for Sports Illustrated (Spieth); Clay Patrick McBride for Sports Illustrated (Ryan); John David Mercer/USA Today Sports (Auriemma); Todd Rosenberg for Sports Illustrated (Marcus Mariota & Jameis Winston)



56 WINSTON VS. MARIOTA
By Austin Murphy

66 AMEER ABDULLAH
By Brian Hamilton

74 AMARI COOPER
By Andy Staples

88 SHANE RAY
By Joan Niesen

106 MICHAEL BENNETT
By Andy Staples

114 RYAN GRIGSON
By Michael Rosenberg

120 DRAFT LAUNDRY LIST
By Ben Baskin

122 MOCK DRAFT
By Chris Burke

126 ROAD TO THE SUPER BOWL
By Ben Baskin

THE RANKINGS

54 SI 300

62 QUARTERBACKS

70 RUNNING BACKS

78 RECEIVERS

82 TIGHT ENDS

84 OFFENSIVE LINE

92 DEFENSE

Photograph by
Clay Patrick McBride
For Sports Illustrated

Sports Illustrated



"To me, he is a Hall of Fame player with the most career hits."

—Cal Ripken

parts [about Rose's situation] are, What does reinstatement mean? What does working in the game mean? I don't know about any of that. But to me, he is a Hall of Fame player with the most career hits. He should be celebrated in the Hall.

RA: *At your last All-Star Game [in 2001], A-Rod gave you your rightful position at shortstop. Do you ever think, What happened to that 25-year-old kid with the classy gesture?*

CR: With Alex I always see the good-hearted kid. I don't know about his decisions or what happened along the way. I kind of react the way the Yankees' fans did [on Opening Day] when he came back. Yes, he has gone through this. Yes, he has served his penalty, but I still pull for him to do well. □

*For more of Ripken's interview, plus the SI Now archive, go to **SI.com/sinow***

CAL RIPKEN JR. **Baseball's Iron Man, a 19-time All-Star, sat down with guest host Ryan Asselta to discuss the Hall of Fame, whether Pete Rose deserves a spot in Cooperstown and why he still pulls for A-Rod.**

RYAN ASSELTA: *The sanctity of the Hall of Fame—with keeping guys out right now like Bonds, Clemens and McGwire—how sacred is it?*

CAL RIPKEN: The hard part for anyone who has a vote is, What are you voting on? Do you know the whole story? Do you know the facts? I think what's happening is voters are saying, We don't know the whole facts so we're not going to make a mistake

[by voting in someone] until we do. If there is any cloud hanging over ya, the safe and careful way [for voters] is to do nothing about it.

RA: *As a Hall of Famer yourself, do you think Pete Rose belongs in the Hall?*

CR: Petey, when you look at his career, is one of the game's best players. So the easy part of that is to say, Yes, he should be in the Hall of Fame. Some of the other difficult

LAST WEEK ON SI NOW



▶ **EPISODE: APRIL 9**

Bengals CB Dre Kirkpatrick on how QB Andy Dalton can take the team to the next level



▶ **EPISODE: APRIL 8**

How former NFL safety Darren Sharper was able to get away with rape for so long



▶ **EPISODE: APRIL 8**

Why RB Adrian Peterson's hurt feelings mean he will never play another down for the Vikings



▶ **EPISODE: APRIL 7**

Will there ever be anyone who can replace Derek Jeter as the face of major league baseball?



LIGHTER WEIGHT DOESN'T MEAN LIGHTWEIGHT.

UP TO 700 LBS. LIGHTER. BUT MORE CAPABLE AND INNOVATIVE THAN EVER.

The first and only pickup with a high-strength, military-grade, aluminum-alloy body. Up to 700 lbs. lighter so you can haul even more /// Class-Exclusive Stowable Loading Ramps* /// Class-Exclusive 360-Degree Camera with Split-View Display* /// Class-Exclusive LED Side Mirror Spotlights* /// Best-In-Class Gas EPA-Estimated Rating: 26 HWY MPG** /// THIS IS THE FUTURE OF TOUGH.

THE ALL-NEW F-150

/// **FORD.COM**



Class is Full-Size Pickups under 8,500 lbs. GVWR. *Available feature. **EPA-estimated rating of 19 city/26 hwy/22 combined mpg. 2.7L EcoBoost® V6, 4x2. Actual mileage will vary.

INBOX

FOR APRIL 6, 2015



I think **Lance Armstrong's** feeling underappreciated balances the scales of justice; he received plenty of appreciation during his glory days while he was cheating.

Mike Kunkel, Sioux Falls, S.D.

I found Dr. Larry Einhorn's comments regarding Armstrong, in which he suggests that the means justified the end, somewhat disgusting. So it's O.K. to cheat if it does some good? We're not only talking about a cheater but also a man who used his power, money and influence to publicly ruin those who told the truth.

William Consolo Jr., Del Aire, Calif.

Thank you for the balanced article on Armstrong. It is good to see something written about him that recognizes both the huge contribution he has made to cancer research while also not shying away from the negative impact his behavior has had on cycling and his reputation.

Joe Stubel, Isle of Palms, S.C.

Reading Michael Bamberger's book excerpt on **Arnold Palmer**, I felt as if Palmer was trying to dismantle the good-guy image that has followed him and that has been the theme of many of the profiles about him over the years. I actually preferred this honest and more revealing portrait of him.

Steve Graham, Seattle



COVER

Russell Westbrook aggressive? I think not. The better word would be *assertive*. What looks to be aggression is simply Westbrook asserting his talent and will over those he is competing against.

Gary Burt
Marble, Minn.

PAGE
22

SCORECARD

Scott Boras worries about the integrity of baseball? What a farce. I take my family to games and drop \$100 just for food. Where is the integrity in that? Maybe Boras can try repping hot dogs and concessions that fans will be able to afford!

John McCreavy
Philadelphia



PAGE
60

POINT AFTER

By staying at UCLA to manage the Bruins' gymnastics team rather than going for Olympic gold again in 2016, **Jordan Weiber** is doing hard work for the greater good.

Bruce Smith
Ventura, Calif.

CONTACT
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Letters E-mail SI at letters@SI.timeinc.com or fax SI at 212-467-2417. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and home telephone number and may be edited for clarity and space. **Customer Service and Subscriptions** For 24/7 service, go to SI.com/customerservice. Call 1-800-528-5000 or write to SI at P.O. Box 30602, Tampa, FL 33630-0602. To purchase reprints of SI covers, go to Slicovers.com. **Advertising** For ad rates, an editorial calendar or a media kit, email SI at SIpubqueries@timeinc.com.



NAUTICA





+

1
of
3

Leading Off

High Friars

■ Boston University senior forward Cason Hohmann skated away disconsolate as Providence—the 15th seed in a 16-seed tournament—celebrated its first NCAA title after a 4-3 victory at TD Garden in Boston last Saturday. Trailing 3-2 in the third period, the Friars got goals from juniors Tom Parisi and Brandon Tanev to take the lead with 6:17 to play. Providence junior goaltender Jon Gillies, who made a career-high 49 saves, including 37 over the first two periods, was named the Frozen Four's Most Outstanding Player.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DAMIAN STROHMEYER
FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED





+

2010

**Leading
Off**

YOU? Oh, Yes

■ Oklahoma senior Sergey Resnick looked momentarily concerned during his parallel bars routine last Saturday at the NCAA men's championships in Norman, Okla. But he came through with a third-place finish to help the Sooners cap a 26-0 season with their ninth national title, the sixth since 2000. Stanford came in second and Penn State third.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
SUE OGROCKI
AP





+

33

**Leading
Off**

Shades Of Rae

■ In this photo taken through an infrared filter, Jordan Spieth tees off last Friday on number 12 at Augusta National, a par-3 over fabled Rae's Creek in the heart of Amen Corner. He parred the 155-yard hole and finished the second round 14 under, a Masters record. Spieth went on to tie the tournament mark by finishing 18 under and, at 21 years old, claimed his first major title (page 42).

PHOTOGRAPH BY
ROBERT BECK
FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

WAKE UP TO
THE STRENGTH
TO ENDURE
A LIFETIME OF
BACON JOKES



WAKE
UP TO
EGGS
with Bacon

Nobody knows eggs better than Bacon, Kevin Bacon. And that's why I know an egg for breakfast provides 6 grams of high-quality protein for 70 calories and no sugar or carbs. So enough with the Bacon puns. Pick up an egg—they're eggcellent.

IncredibleEgg.org



SCORECARD

Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH

Tip-offs

Who's got an edge in the NBA postseason?
A panel of experts provides some clues

INTERVIEWS BY MATT DOLLINGER



Lee
Jenkins



Andre
Drummond



Isiah
Thomas



Chauncey
Billups



Jeff
Van Gundy

WITH THE NBA playoffs approaching, SI assembled a knowledgeable group from all walks of the NBA to address some key questions about the coming weeks.

How much does experience matter in the playoffs?

Lee Jenkins, SI senior writer History tells us that it matters, that you don't go from the No. 8 seed to the Finals unless you sign LeBron James and some other guys.

Chauncey Billups, 2004 NBA champion Experience is the best teacher. I worry about that for the Hawks and the Warriors.

Jeff Van Gundy, former Knicks and Rockets coach Great players trump experience every time.

Isiah Thomas, 1989 and '90 NBA champion The playoffs really are a game of intellect. History favors the team that makes the fewest mistakes, and that's where experience comes in.



Are the East-leading Hawks legitimate title contenders?

Billups I see similarities between them and the Pistons' championship team I was on. They play hard on both ends of the floor, and they have a point guard in Jeff Teague who reminds me of myself. Al Horford is similar to Ben Wallace as the heart and soul of that team. You look at Kyle Korver and he runs the floor like Rip Hamilton. It's actually kind of eerie.

Van Gundy Atlanta has great players, and I have no doubt it'll make a run to the East finals. There are only four or five teams that are true contenders at this point, and the Hawks are one of them.

Jenkins In a year the Hawks have gone from the 8 seed to the 1, even though their most significant acquisition was Thabo Sefolosha. Everything clicked for Atlanta this season, but oddly enough, the Sefolosha acquisition did not. He started only seven games, averaged fewer than 19 minutes and never made the impact that he did in Oklahoma City. Given the circumstances surrounding Sefolosha's injury, the Hawks could find themselves in the public eye for political reasons, but considering the way this season started, they're used to that.

Thomas The Knicks won 37 games last year, the Hawks won 38. Both of those teams were injured throughout the year [last year]. The Hawks kept their team and brought back their healthy players,



◆Driving Forces

For more analysis, predictions and insight on the Hawks (above) and the other playoff teams, check out the full panel discussion at SI.com/nba

and they are the No. 1 team in the East. Regardless, they are an incredible story. The Knicks. . .

How do you like the Cavaliers' chances?

Andre Drummond, Pistons center They are going to be tough to stop now that they've added J.R. Smith and Iman Shumpert. Timofey Mozgov gives them a low-post presence they really needed, too.

Jenkins I was talking with a former GM recently and he steered the conversation to the hot news story of the day, which was the revelation that LeBron calls a lot of the Cavaliers' plays. "Isn't that great?" he said. "As a coach, as a GM, that's what you always want—for your best players to take ownership of the system. It means he's made the emotional investment."

Thomas Smith and Shumpert solidify their defensive perimeter play, which is so critical in today's NBA. I don't know if I've ever witnessed a time in my life when the perimeter defense was as bad as it is

now. We rave about how guys can dribble and get to the rim, but there used to be a defender there! If Cleveland can get past Chicago, I believe the Cavs will come out of the East.

Van Gundy This is a personnel league, not a system league. They've been dominant since going to their new eight-man rotation. I know we're only allowed to blame [coach] David Blatt for things, but the work he and [GM] David Griffin have done this season gets lost in the shuffle. If [Anderson] Varejão doesn't get hurt, I don't think they get Mozgov, and then they aren't good enough to contend. Blatt has made hard choices instead of trying to appease a lot of people, and that's always a sign of a great coach.

Billups It's tough to pick against them. You're going to have to beat LeBron James four out of seven times. That's a tall order, man.

What's your Finals prediction?

Jenkins I've searched for a reason to pick against the Warriors and I'm tapped out. In the NBA,

unlike other sports, the best team is usually the one holding the trophy at the end. Golden State has the best team, by far. *Warriors over Cavaliers.*

Billups The Spurs have championship DNA. The Warrior needs to get their heart broken one time to get over the hump. That's what happened with Cleveland when I was in Detroit. After losing to us, LeBron and the Cavs finally got good enough to get through to the Finals. They remembered that feeling and what it's like to lose and used it as motivation. *Spurs over Cavaliers.*

Van Gundy I truly don't believe the Warriors will be challenged. I think Golden State is being undersold, and I really don't understand it. Teams as dominant as Golden State offensively and defensively win it all unless they have a major injury. In the East, I think the Hawks are going to upset the Cavaliers. They'll get it to seven and find a way. *Warriors over Hawks.*

Drummond The Cavs are playing with unbelievable confidence, and I think with the momentum they have, they'll be tough to stop. *Cavaliers over Warriors.*

Thomas I'm going to give San Antonio its due respect and pick the champions. In the East, Cleveland has the two best players on one team in Kyrie Irving and LeBron, but Chicago has the edge in the coaching matchup. I just think the talent factor gives them too much of an advantage. *Spurs over Cavaliers.* □



SEE THE FUTURE. SPONSOR A CHILD.

If you really look, you can see the future in every child. Through the power of child sponsorship, you can change the life of a child in need – transforming the future for all of us. **Sponsor a child** here in the United States or around the world today.

1-844-9-SPONSOR

Sponsor.SaveTheChildren.org/SeetheFuture

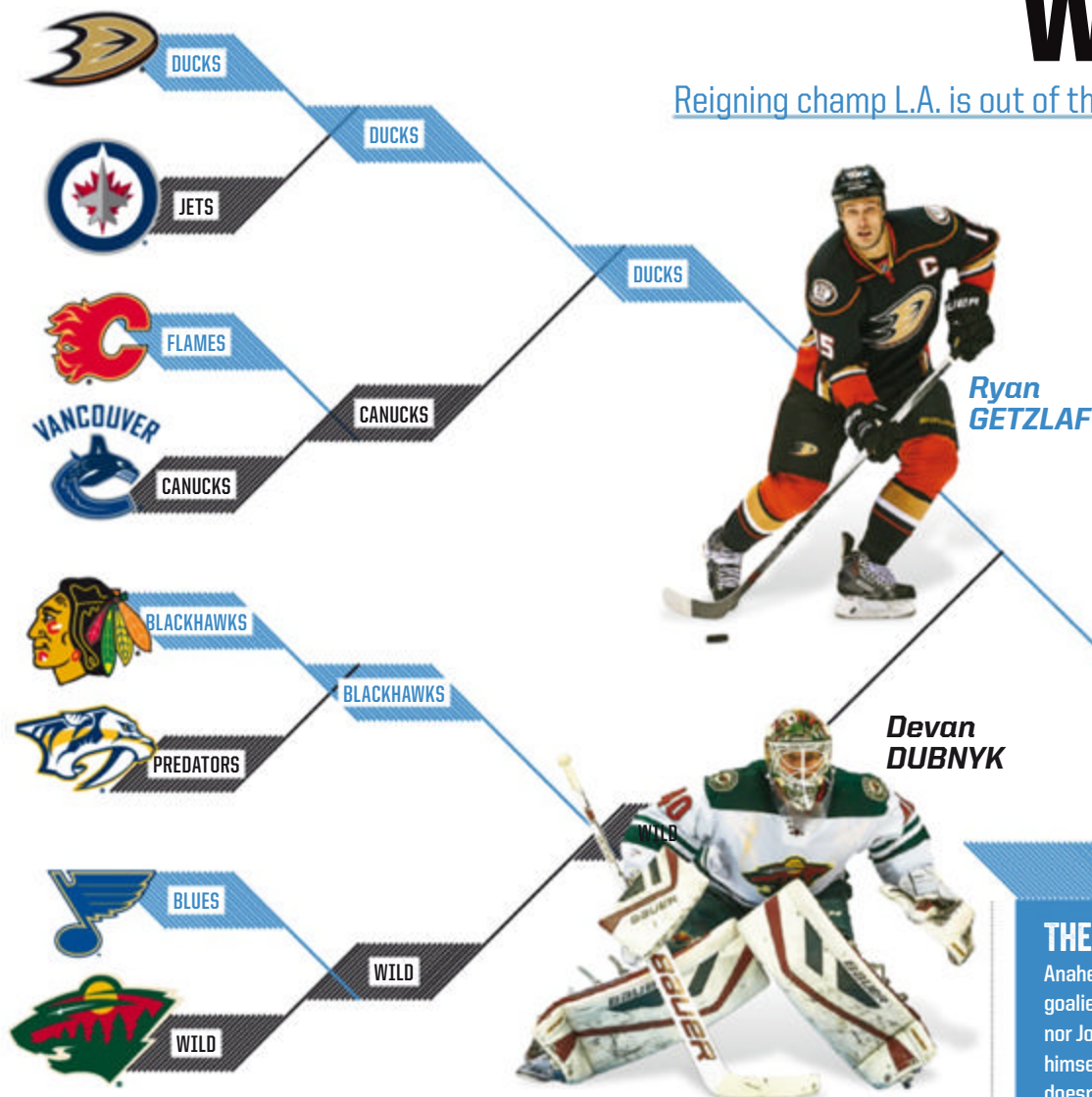


Save the Children®

At Save the Children, we combine your gifts with those of other sponsors – rather than give money directly to a sponsored child – to support projects that benefit sponsored children as well as others in the community. Federal income tax law requires us to inform you that Save the Children did not provide you with any goods or services in connection with this contribution that would reduce your charitable contribution deduction.

Would-b

Reigning champ L.A. is out of the playoffs, but the Cup



SARAH KWAK PICKS THE WEST

→ **THE WILD ARE** the West's hottest team of the second half. Since acquiring goalie Devan Dubnyk on Jan. 14, Minnesota has gone 28-9-3, riding its new netminder for all but one game. Leading the league in wins (25) and GAA (1.72) since the All-Star break, Dubnyk should be decisive in a first-round matchup with the Blues, who have ranked in the bottom half in scoring since February. After the Blackhawks defeat the Predators, who have won just six of their last 21 games, the Wild will take the opportunity to exact revenge on Chicago, which put an end to the last two seasons in Minnesota.

The Ducks will waste out of the Pacific, which they dominated all season, drawing the big and physical Jets, who will ride the high of their city's first trip to the playoffs in 19 years. But Anaheim has the size to match and holds a distinct advantage in top-end skill and leadership with center Ryan Getzlaf (70 points) and winger Corey Perry (33 goals). The Ducks went 3-1-1 against the Canucks and were a perfect 3-0-0 against the Wild, indicating that they have the depth and balance to roll to the finals.

THE DUCKS

Anaheim has only one weakness: goalie. Neither Frederik Andersen nor John Gibson has asserted himself, but a question in net doesn't have to be a death sentence. The 2008 Red Wings won the Cup while flipping between Dominik Hasek and Chris Osgood. The Flyers and the Blackhawks made it to the finals in '10 with goalies neither team now employs. Anaheim's D raises some questions too, but with eight solid-if-not-spectacular blueliners, coach Bruce Boudreau can at least throw bodies at the problem. That should allow an assertive, physical attack to win the day, especially in typically tight playoff matchups; the Ducks were 33-1-7 in one-goal games.

e Kings

could stay in California—unless it takes a trip to Florida

**Steven
STAMKOS**



LIGHTNING

LIGHTNING

LIGHTNING



RED WINGS



SENATORS



CANADIENS

CANADIENS



ISLANDERS



ISLANDERS

CAPITALS



**Rick
NASH**



RANGERS

RANGERS

PENGUINS



RANGERS



THE LIGHTNING

Four years after losing to the Bruins in a tight Eastern Conference finals, Tampa Bay surely relished eliminating Boston from contention on this season's last day. Now the Lightning can fulfill the symbolic potential of that game and take the Bruins' mantle as the beast of the East. What this year's outfit has in common with that 2011 team is center Steven Stamkos (43 goals) and defenseman Victor Hedman (38 points, +12), its two young superstars. What's different includes a rebuilt defense and an embarrassment of skill at forward. When things tighten up, Tampa has three lines that can make something out of nothing.

SAM PAGE PICKS THE EAST

→ **THE OBVIOUS CANDIDATE** to come out of the East is the Rangers—last season's conference champs grabbed this year's Presidents' Trophy and are hot at the right time. They lack several hallmarks of true Cup contenders, though, most notably depth down the middle. Even their presumed route through the hobbling Penguins will stall against a Pittsburgh team led by the always dangerous Sidney Crosby. The next best team by seed, the Canadiens, would be the worst in the field if not for Carey Price. Montreal's netminder will do enough to steal the first-round series against the Senators, but that they need to steal from a miracle playoff crasher sums up the Habs' chances after round 1.

Picking the Islanders is an endorsement their body of work, not anything they've done recently. It's their last hurrah on Long Island, but in an inevitable second-round blood feud between neighbors, four games in Madison Square Garden trumps three in the Mausoleum. Ultimately GM Steve Yzerman's Lightning, made in the Red Wings' image, seem poised for first-round patricide. They'll remind aging Detroit players of their younger, better selves.

Island Journeys

Cuba is open to competition with U.S. teams, but can it keep up?

NOW THAT PRESIDENT OBAMA, who met with Cuban leader Raul Castro last week, is playing ball with the formerly embargoed nation, how about the rest of us? The NASL's New York Cosmos, who play their home opener against Tampa Bay on April 18, will take on the Cuban national team in an exhibition in Havana this June, making it the first American professional team to play in Cuba in 16 years. The Cosmos are not alone. The NBA and FIBA will host development camps in Cuba this year, and MLB is attempting to schedule a spring training game in Havana for 2016. Baseball is the national sport, but soccer is on the rise. Here's how Cuban team sports teams stack up. —*Angelina Matarozzi*



BASEBALL

CURRENT WORLD RANK 3

GREATEST SUCCESS 1992, '96 AND 2004 OLYMPICS, GOLD



BASKETBALL

MEN'S WORLD RANK 58

GREATEST SUCCESS 1972 OLYMPICS, BRONZE

WOMEN'S WORLD RANK 13

GREATEST SUCCESS 1992 OLYMPICS, FOURTH



VOLLEYBALL

MEN'S WORLD RANK 11

GREATEST SUCCESS 1976 OLYMPICS, BRONZE

WOMEN'S WORLD RANK 26

GREATEST SUCCESS 1992, '96, 2000 OLYMPICS, GOLD



SOCCER

MEN'S WORLD RANK 109

GREATEST SUCCESS 2012 CARIBBEAN CUP, GOLD

WOMEN'S WORLD RANK 96

GREATEST SUCCESS 84TH IN 2009 RANKING

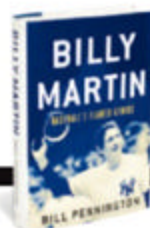
SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

After a brawl on April 6, Irish Olympic silver medalist John Joe Nevin was **barred from every pub in County Westmeath** until his May 21 trial for public intoxication and abusive behavior.



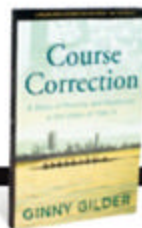
Ben Hogan
Tim Scott

The author worked with Hogan for years as a sales and marketing exec; not poetic but insightful peek behind some of the myths.
#weenicemon



Billy Martin
Bill Pennington

N.Y. Times reporter offers a comprehensive and well-written take that expands on the man beyond cantankerous dirt-kicking sot.
#billyball



Course Correction
Ginny Gilder

Olympic rower's sensitive memoir about an alcoholic mom, getting naked for Title IX and coming to grips with her sexuality.
#hihosilver



Tommy Lasorda
Colin Gunderson

Authorized bio by a former Dodgers p.r. guy; great stories and quotes but a limited picture of the sometimes prickly Lasorda.
#baseballlifer



BOOKS

**TWEETABLE
REVIEWS**



YOU WILL TRAVEL
IN A LAND OF MARVELS.

—JULES VERNE

kindle voyage

BRILLIANTLY CRISP DISPLAY • REMARKABLY THIN DESIGN
EFFORTLESS PAGE TURNING • LIGHT THAT ADJUSTS WITH YOU

amazon

TRAINING WITH

+

Big Air

[Trevor Bauer explains the secret of his success: long toss](#)

INDIANS RIGHTHANDER

Trevor Bauer likes to throw the ball as high and far as he can, an arm-strengthening practice known as long toss, and he does so three to five times per week. “It’s done with a very fluid motion,” says Bauer, Cleveland’s No. 3 starter. “It appears to be effortless because the body is very synced up. It’s not effortless. It’s actually max effort, but it can only happen when the body is connected. To launch a ball 300, 350 or 400 feet, it takes a high level of athleticism. That’s a big reason why I like it.”



As an 11-year-old, Bauer attended a Southern California clinic run by Alan Jaeger, a self-proclaimed nonscientific long-toss expert who has also worked with Barry Zito and Dan Haren. “I’ve lived this on the field as a teacher for 24 years, and as a thrower of a baseball for 35 years,” says Jaeger. “You know in your bones exactly what happens when you long-toss. You become an athlete. You stretch your

arm out. You free yourself up to become natural.” Long toss, in Jaeger’s view, is the antithesis of all the mechanical instruction pitchers receive.

Bauer says there’s a right and wrong way to long toss—“Most important is that you listen to your body. Listen to your arm. It shouldn’t hurt”—and adds that as he’s learned to throw the ball farther, he’s naturally added velocity.

“When I threw the ball

300 feet, that translated to about 80 miles per hour on the mound,” Bauer says. “As I’ve gotten to where I can throw a ball 420-ish feet, I’ve been able to hit 100.”

Long toss, as Jaeger teaches it, is somewhat controversial in pro baseball. A number of clubs limit their pitchers to 120 feet and insist they throw the ball on a line, not with an as-high-as-you-want-it arc, as Jaeger’s students do. They also limit long-toss sessions to 10 minutes. Bauer says his long-toss sessions can last up to 20 or 30 minutes, depending on how he feels, and usually end with a series of pitches thrown from 60 feet, six inches.

“Because his arm has such great strength, it’s allowed Trevor to really work at his craft,” Jaeger says. “Long toss allows him to not only throw with freedom and athleticism and arm strength, it allows him to throw a lot.”

—Jeff Bradley

EDGE

Presented by

For more athlete training profiles and tips, go to SI.com/trainingwith

Long and Strong

Jaeger says there is no set number of throws or length of time to stay at each distance. The key is to “listen to your arm,” says Jaeger. Each age group can start 10- to 20-foot apart and gradually move back, making the initial throws at approximately a 25-degree angle. In middle distances the thrower should incorporate a crow hop, using the legs to help take some strain off the arm. The final distance, which is an approximation, should use a 35-degree arc. After reaching the peak distance, throwers should come back in 10-foot increments with each throw while maintaining the same intensity. Once the arm is in shape, throwing three to five days a week is encouraged.

AGE	FEET		
8-12	75	90	180
	90	125	300
13-16	90	125	350+
17+	90	125	350+



WHAT ARE YOU GETTING READY FOR?

Whatever your day has in store for you, start it off with Edge® Shave gel. It creates a layer of lubricating molecules that helps your razor give you a close shave with less irritation.



**GET
YOUR
EDGE™**



JUST MY TYPE

→ Interview by **DAN PATRICK**

DAN PATRICK: Was the NFL always a goal?

SARAH THOMAS: Not in the beginning. As an official you're just trying to get through each play and each game. I always said if the National Football League called, I wouldn't turn them down. They called last Thursday, and I'm in.

DP: What's that phone call like?

ST: It was exciting when you see area code 212 pop up on your phone this time of the year. During the season I don't know if I necessarily want to see that. This time of year, however, it's worth picking up the phone to hear [NFL vice president of officiating] Dean Blandino say, "Welcome to the NFL."

DP: Do you want to be known as a pioneer, or do you want to be anonymous?

ST: This is a first [as a full-time NFL female official]. It's meaningful to a lot of people. But anyone who officiates football wants to go unnoticed. The mind-set of officials is that the best game we can work is the one we can leave and nobody even knew we were there. I have worked several games, and they didn't even know a female was out there. I want to blend in.

DP: Did you ever have a college player apologize for bad language?



SARAH THOMAS

FIRST LADY

The 41-year-old line judge, a 19-year vet who spent eight seasons with Conference USA and in 2009 was the first woman to officiate a bowl game, has broken the NFL's gender barrier.

ST: Not really. I've had them call me *sir* and apologize for that.

DP: What's the hardest rule to enforce?

ST: Ones from the line of scrimmage. There's so much that's happening. We just want to be a line of scrimmage expert—head linesmen and line judges. Grasping everything from the collegiate level on to the NFL level. . . . I've got a lot of work ahead of me, just as any new official would.

DP: How do I argue with you without drawing your ire?

ST: Just ask me [a question]. Shoot it to me straight. I understand the game. It is a passionate, competitive game. I don't want to get in an argument with anyone. I respect their opinion, and I'll address their issue.

DP: Ever been run over?

ST: No, but I have been flipped in the air. But I got up.

DP: What do officials do at this time of year?

ST: Preparation. Preparation. Preparation. There's no off-season in officiating. You're constantly looking at film. You're constantly talking to mentors, other game officials. Doing quizzes. Training and working out. Clinics. Minicamps. And then training camp.

DP: Did Dez Bryant catch that ball in the playoffs?

ST: I can tell you, we're just the enforcers of the rules.

DP: You already sound like an official.

ST: Because I am. □

GUEST SHOTS SAY WHAT?



Duke coach
Mike Krzyzewski

talked about getting comfortable with one-and-done players. "I've always loved freshmen," he said. "But I actually like sophomores even better, and seniors I embrace." . . . Now



that **Bud Selig** has retired as MLB

commissioner, he's teaching college courses in history at Wisconsin and on sports law at Marquette. "I told an owner the other day, 'Boy, I would like to get all of you in a class,'" Selig told me. "Because for once in my life I could flunk you and bail out on you." . . . New Texas basketball coach

Shaka Smart isn't



worried about competing with

Longhorns football. "There's been over 50 national championships here among different sports," Smart said. "The success and interest of football, that's actually going to be a positive for us."

A 467-HORSEPOWER LINE IN THE SAND



INTRODUCING THE FIRST-EVER RC F

Engineered from the asphalt up to satisfy the most demanding driving enthusiasts, its 5.0-liter, naturally aspirated V8 engine produces 467 horsepower¹, thanks to lightweight titanium intake valves and forged connecting rods that deliver superior strength. An available Performance Package² featuring a Torque Vectoring Differential, carbon fiber roof and speed-activated rear wing helps ensure unprecedented performance and handling. Inside the cockpit, a dynamic gauge cluster features customizable displays while low-set, race-inspired front sport seats instill confidence through every curve. The RC F from Lexus. Once driven, there's no going back.



lexus.com/RCF | #LexusRCF

THEY SAID IT

“We have to assist him in developing and growing as a person. And it’s not going to be easy.”

David Cornwell

Jameis Winston's attorney, talking about preparing the QB (below) for life as an NFL player.

**Cheick Diallo** | *Centereach, N.Y.* | *Basketball*

Cheick, a 6' 9" senior power forward at Our Savior New American School, scored 18 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead the East to a 111–91 win over the West in the 38th annual McDonald's All-American Game in Chicago. He was named MVP. Cheick averaged 17.6 points, 10.5 boards and 2.5 blocks for the Pioneers this season.

**Emily Sonny** | *Arroyo Grande, Calif.* | *Water Polo*

Emily, a junior goalkeeper at Arroyo Grande High, had 18 saves, including stopping a five-meter penalty shot, to carry the Eagles to a 6–4 victory over Martin Luther King High (Riverside) for the Division 3 CIF Southern Section title. The Division 3 player of the year, she finished with a .750 save percentage and 4.00 goals-against average.

**Jesse Scott** | *Cullman, Ala.* | *Baseball*

Jesse, a senior lefthander at Cullman High, broke the state record for consecutive scoreless innings ($29\frac{2}{3}$) with 33 during a 5–1 win over Hartselle High. His streak ended in the fifth when a batter barely beat out the relay on a double play. Jesse was 9–1 at week's end with an 0.72 ERA. He will play at Auburn.

FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited by ALEXANDRA FENWICK

**Stephanie Garcia** | *Houston* | *Soccer*

Stephanie, a senior forward at Alief Elsik High, had 37 goals and five assists to lead the city in scoring for the second straight year. A three-time district MVP, she was named an Academic All-State by the Texas Association of Soccer Coaches. Stephanie, who holds the school records for season (48) and career (146) goals, will play at Southern Mississippi.

**Maverick McNealy** | *Portola Valley, Calif.* | *Golf*

McNealy, a sophomore at Stanford, overcame a three-shot deficit to defeat UAB's Will Cannon in The Goodwin tournament at Stanford Golf Course. Both players carded 13-under 197s; McNealy prevailed in a playoff to become the first college player to reach four victories this season. He is ranked No. 1 by Golfweek.com.

**Mary Killman** | *McKinney, Texas* | *Synchronized Swimming*

Killman, a junior at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Mo., earned her third straight titles in both solo and duet at senior nationals in Moraga, Calif., leading the Lady Lions to their first team championship. A 2012 Olympian and a member of the Potawatomi nation, she will compete at worlds in Kazan, Russia, in July.

Nominate Now ▼

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to SI.com/faces. For more on outstanding amateur athletes, follow [@SI_Faces](https://twitter.com/SI_Faces) on Twitter.

A SERIES
FROM THE
EDITORS OF

FORTUNE
AND
Sports
Illustrated

SCORECARD

PRO-FILES

Trading Up

Dan Goldie turned a troubled childhood into a pro tennis career, then used his sport to spur a successful run in finance

BY ANDREW LAWRENCE

DAN GOLDIE'S PRO tennis career spanned 5½ years, during which he won four titles (two in singles, two in doubles), reached 27th in the ATP world rankings (in 1989) and earned \$683,000 in prize money—or less than one 1/1,000 of the money he now manages through Dan Goldie Financial Services in Palo Alto, Calif. For Goldie, 51, the two pursuits are linked because his sports career enabled his life as a financial pro.

Growing up in the 1970s in McLean, Va., he played tennis with a singular purpose: to escape a domestic life dotted with fear and poverty. “My father was an abusive alcoholic,” he says. “I never wanted to go home. So what happened was, I engineered a way out of the situation—starting around age 12, when I began to realize I had a talent for tennis.”

Goldie began competing and training nonstop, using

each victory as fuel to power his escape. Three years later he emerged as the top 18-and-under player in the mid-Atlantic. Looking back, Goldie concedes that the competition “was relatively weak,” but at the time it felt like a huge accomplishment.

If Goldie followed many of the other top young players of the era, he could have gone to the Bollettieri Academy in Bradenton, Fla., the tennis hothouse that would produce many of the opponents Goldie faced on the pro tour, such as Andre Agassi (against whom he went 0–3), Boris Becker (0–2) and Jim Courier (1–2). But Goldie’s parents were divorcing; his dad was an unemployed engineer who died of complications from alcoholism in 1995, and his mother’s income as a bookkeeper couldn’t cover the academy’s steep tuition. “We went from an upper-middle-class family living comfortably,

+ Great Racket

Goldie, who reached No. 27 in the world in tennis, has twice been named a top independent financial adviser by *Barron's*.

to my mother and I living alone, paycheck to paycheck,” Goldie recalls. That frightening experience, he says, “caused me to place a high value on financial security.”

Goldie finally left in the fall of 1982, bound for Stanford on a full tennis scholarship. During his sophomore year Goldie’s serve-and-volley style—a common approach at the time that was well-suited to his 6’ 2”, 175-pound frame—earned him a spot as a practice player on the U.S. Davis Cup team. As a junior he won the Pac-10 singles and doubles (with Eric Rosenfeld) championships and the Intercollegiate Tennis Association National Indoor crown. In ’86, his last year at Stanford, he was named an All-America for a third time and won the NCAA singles title, leaving with a record of 71–24.

With that success as a springboard, Goldie immediately

SI.COM

BOOKMARK
IT TODAY!

BREAKING
NEWS

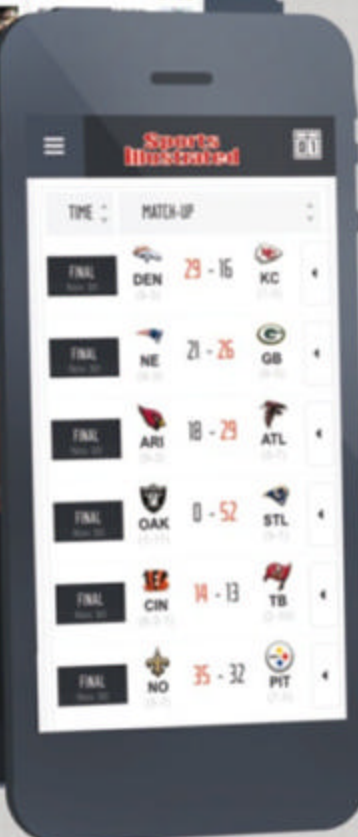
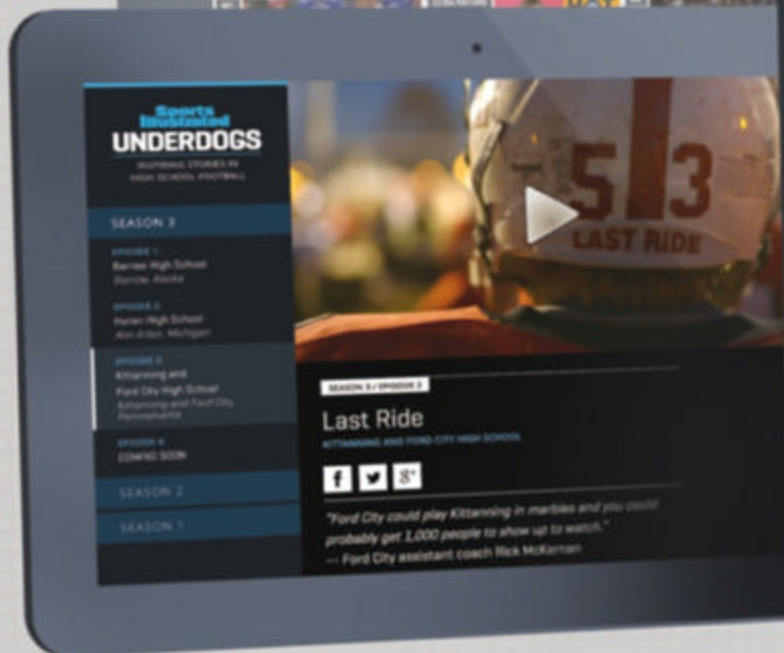
SPORTS NEWS,
VIEWS, VIDEO
AND INSIGHT

FROM THE BEST
STORYTELLERS
IN SPORTS

RAPIDLY
EXPANDING
VIDEO CONTENT:

DAILY LIVE
SHOWS

TIMELY REPORTS
AND IN-DEPTH
ANALYSIS



NEWS ILLUSTRATED | VIEWS ILLUSTRATED | SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

turned pro; he regretted the move almost as quickly. Although he could hold his own against top players—at Wimbledon in 1989 he beat Jimmy Connors in a second-round match—Goldie could just as easily lose to lesser lights. “I don’t think I really loved the game the way the top players did,” he says. “I made a mistake, personally, of being too focused on the earnings dimension of professional tennis.”

GOLDIE'S FIXATION

with money went beyond counting how much he was making. At Stanford he took business-school courses while earning a bachelor's degree in economics, and he later completed an MBA at Berkeley. While he played, Goldie traded on his stature as a tennis player to build relationships with top financial professionals, “trying to get a feel for what this industry is like,” which gave him ideas about one day starting his own firm.

In 1991, suffering from bad shins, Goldie retired from tennis with a career record of 122–117. Three months later he launched an independent financial advisory firm. He began with no clients and a minimum buy-in of \$50,000. Today his firm manages \$700 million in assets for more than 300 clients, and the buy-in is \$1 million.

Clients get plenty of guidance: Goldie helps them with retirement planning, college savings, insurance and more. But investment management is a central focus, and in that, he's closely aligned with Dimensional Fund Advisors (DFA), a firm based in Austin. DFA runs mutual funds that eschew market timing and forecasting—factors that can make investing more erratic and



more expensive—in favor of a quantitative process that spreads investors' money across a diversified range of assets. Goldie met with DFA early in his career and has been using their funds since. His clients, he says, “are basically exposed to the global market in a balanced way.”

“Dan has a unique blend of focus, discipline and devotion to his clients,” says David Booth, the chairman and co-CEO of DFA. “He has also demonstrated an uncommon ability to communicate the often complex ideas of academic finance in simple and intuitive ways.”

Goldie's approach to investing has brought him more acclaim than he ever found on the court. *Barron's* has twice named him one of its top independent financial advisers. It also inspired a how-to manual for which Goldie is perhaps now best known, *The Investment Answer: Learn to Manage Your Money & Protect Your Financial Future*.

+ Goldie Moment

In 1989, Goldie upset Connors in the second round at Wimbledon, probably the greatest victory of his 5½-year pro career.

SI.COM

To watch a video about Goldie and to see the entire Pro-Files video series, go to SI.com/pro-files

The book was a labor of love that Goldie cowrote with longtime client and friend Gordon Murray, a veteran bond salesman and managing director at Lehman Brothers who died of cancer in 2011 at age 60, two weeks before the book's hardcover release.

The book's central theme is the folly of trying to beat the market. But after Murray's death, that theme became secondary to the story of Murray, a Wall Street insider who found religion about the industry's misleading and risky ways thanks to a former tennis ace who introduced him to a new way of investing. *The Investment Answer* spent one month atop *The New York Times* best-seller list and has been translated into at least eight languages.

Goldie says the book's ideal reader is someone who “isn't interested in numbers or money but really needs to know this information.” Athletes often fit that description. “They've got all this money and all these people wanting stuff from them and telling them what to do—that's why there are so many bankrupt former athletes,” adds Goldie, whose clients include a handful of former touring pros.

This September, Goldie plans a rare return to the court: He'll play in an exhibition for only the second time since his retirement, at a charity event at Stanford. Thanks to advances in equipment, Goldie says, tennis feels “challenging and fun” again, and completely different: “Sometimes I feel like I am playing Ping-Pong.” But he'll never regret leaving the game as early as he did. “I get a lot of psychic value today from helping people become and stay financially sound,” Goldie says. “It is the primary reason I do what I do.” □



WINGIN' IT

At the Big Tree Inn last week, Ryan talked shop with two other familiar faces: Bills legends Jim Kelly (far left) and Thurman Thomas.

Photograph by
Clay Patrick McBride
For Sports Illustrated

After a tumultuous final act with the Jets, Rex Ryan has landed in Buffalo, instantly infusing the Bills with three qualities they've been short on since their Super Bowl heyday: personality, excitement and optimism

BY JENNY VRENTAS

THE REX EFFECT



A FEW MINUTES after 7 a.m. on a recent Tuesday, the most conspicuous truck in western New York pulls into a Tim Hortons parking lot less than a mile from Ralph Wilson Stadium. *Small iced cappuccino, with whip, coming right up.*

Rex Ryan stops in every morning on his way to work, and he doesn't have to place his order anymore. Loni Rivera, the regular behind the counter on the early shift, starts making his drink as soon as she spies his Bills pickup—a custom-wrapped Ford F-250, royal blue, with a giant charging buffalo on either side, as subtle as its driver. “Coach,” she says, “a gentleman who works here has a piece of the stadium, goal posts, from the 1990s. He wants you to have it.”

Ryan has been the coach of the Bills for three months, but already he's the new face of the franchise. Throughout greater Buffalo, his arrival has done much to erase the agony of the 15 years that have passed since the team's last playoff appearance—the longest drought in the NFL. If anyone knows how to feed hope, it's Ryan, who in his introductory press conference issued orders that the Bills and their fans should start getting ready for January football.

Well-known for having made a Super Bowl guarantee during his Jets tenure, Ryan may have made his boldest declaration yet when he arrived on the shores of Lake Erie: Despite inheriting a roster that lacked an established quarterback, despite remaining in the same division as Tom Brady and Bill Belichick, and despite taking over a team that had churned through seven head coaches—none lasting more than 3½ years—since Marv Levy left after 1997, the 52-year-old Ryan decreed that this will be his final head coaching job. “Three years?” Ryan says. “Hell, I'm blowing the roof off of that. By a bunch.”



After six tumultuous seasons with the Jets—that Super Bowl guarantee never did pay off—Ryan was so certain he'd found his true home in Buffalo that he accepted the Bills' offer 12 days after being fired by New York, without knowing how much the Bills would pay him. His five-year, \$27.5 million contract was negotiated only after he committed to Terry Pegula on Jan. 10, during a second interview in the owner's South Florida business office.

In the weeks that followed, Ryan bought a house near the Bills' stadium and updated the tattoo on his right arm; the pin-up rendition of his wife, Michelle, wearing a number 6 jersey now sports Bills blue instead of Jets green. Season-ticket sales have risen from 47,482 last season to nearly 53,000 so far, putting the Bills within striking distance of their high-water mark, 57,132, set in 1992 during their run of four straight AFC championships.



“I WASN'T BOSS ANYMORE,” RYAN

Ryan might be nearly 400 miles from the tabloid headlines and sports-talk chatter that he once dominated, but he's still lord-ing over the Empire State, and beyond.

“We're not only a national brand, we're starting to be a destination because of Rex and what we're building here,” says general manager Doug Whaley, who credits Ryan with luring players such as free-agent wideout Percy Harvin. “We're trying to be a serious contender.”



IF THERE'S a tie that binds Ryan and the Bills, it might be their respective failures to deliver a Lombardi Trophy to a rabid fan base. Buffalo, stocked with future Hall of Famers Jim Kelly, Thurman Thomas and Bruce Smith, was a Super Bowl bridesmaid each year from 1990 to '93, the franchise's only Super Bowl appearances. Ryan's Jets, after back-to-back AFC title game appearances in his first two seasons with New York, failed to finish above .500 over the next four years. Steadily, the opportunity he'd waited so long for slipped away from him.

The Jets had seemed like a perfect fit. Ryan's father, Buddy, spent eight seasons as the Jets' defensive line coach and was on staff when they won Super Bowl III, around the time that a six-year-old Rex first dreamed of being a football coach.

JARED WICKERHAM/GETTY IMAGES (RYAN TOP);
BRETT CARLSEN/GETTY IMAGES (RYAN INSET)

When the Jets' job became available, Rex, who had overseen a perennial top 10 defense as the Ravens' coordinator, would have walked the length of I-95 from Baltimore to New York to accept it. He brought with him an outsized personality perfectly suited to the New York market.

Ryan thought his 2010 team should have been his Super Bowl squad, and he wanted to keep it together for one more run. But the Jets lost some key free agents, and in '11, Ryan's third season, they finished 8–8 and were all but eliminated from playoff contention following a Christmas Eve loss to the local-rival Giants. Not long after, Ryan says he began to feel he was losing sway within the organization.

In April 2012 the Jets hired a new team president, Neil Glat. That season the team went 6–10, and subsequently general manager Mike Tannenbaum was replaced by John Idzik. Despite having put on a good face, Ryan says he felt like a “leftover” under the new GM, half of an arranged marriage “who could be replaced at any time.”

“I wasn’t the boss any-

NEW FACES

In addition to Ryan, Buffalo newbies include (below, from left) McCoy, Cassel, Harvin and—yikes—Incognito.

for that job.” (A Jets spokesman told SI: “It’s surprising and disappointing that Rex feels that way. There was no effort by the organization to move away from him in any way.”)

The Jets finished 8–8 and missed the playoffs in 2013, but that may have been Ryan’s best coaching performance, as he worked with a depleted roster. After the season finale, a 20–7 win over the Dolphins, owner Woody Johnson announced that Ryan would return in ’14. Ryan was also given a multiyear contract extension. But the organization didn’t extend his assistants, leaving many of them on one-year deals.

“Everybody knew then we weren’t going to make it [as a staff],” says Dennis Thurman, Ryan’s defensive coordinator in New York and now in Buffalo. “We tried to put a good face on, and we coached our butts off. But they didn’t want us. We weren’t their guys. We played out the string, and it was frustrating. And I think the players felt our frustration. Because toward the end I think they knew too.”

Going into the 2014 season, the Jets had deficiencies at critical positions, including cornerback and receiver, but Ryan believed those holes could be mended to make the team competitive. The agent for All-Pro cornerback Darrelle Revis called the Jets about his returning to the team, but the Jets weren’t interested in their onetime star. (A year later they brought

SAYS OF THE JETS’ CHANGES. “I KNEW I WASN’T LONG FOR THE JOB.”



more,” Ryan says. “I was just a guy. Whether they want to say it or not, all of a sudden I became less important to the team.”

A meeting at Jets headquarters in April 2013 troubled Ryan. The league office encouraged teams to hold organization-wide branding exercises, and the Jets’ new senior vice president of marketing and fan engagement built theirs around three words: *bold*, *electrifying*, *united*. One of the slides during the presentation parsed the differences between *brash*—an adjective regularly attached to the head coach—and *bold*. Ryan, who was sitting in the room, says he felt singled out.

“They were trying to pull away from me,” he says. “Like it was my fault, somehow, that people identified the Jets with me, and that was a bad thing and not a good thing. I was just being who I was. From that point on I knew I wasn’t going to be long

him back on a \$70 million contract.) Cornerback Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie visited with the Jets but left without a deal and signed with the Giants. According to multiple members of Ryan’s Jets staff, frustrations ran high when the team didn’t pursue free-agent wideout DeSean Jackson and when pleas to select Clemson receiver Martavis Bryant on the third day of the draft were ignored. (The Jets drafted two receivers in the fourth round before the Steelers took Bryant, who had eight TDs as a rookie: Oklahoma’s Jalen Saunders, who was cut in September, and UCLA’s Shaq Evans, who spent 2014 on injured reserve.)

Even before the season began, Ryan was worried about the Jets’ ability to compete. Last summer he bought a house in the Nashville suburbs. “When the draft and free agency didn’t go the way I would have liked it to, I was concerned,” Ryan says. “That’s why I bought a house in Tennessee. I didn’t know what the hell was going to happen, but I knew I would need someplace to live. That I was probably going to get fired.”

A few weeks into the 2014 season, he became more than just concerned—he felt there was a master plan in place. He got a call from a friend who told him a high-ranking member of the Jets’ scouting department was on the road telling reps from other teams that they weren’t spending money because they were getting a new head coach in ’15.

The Jets stumbled to a 4–12 record, and Johnson fired Ryan the Monday after the season finale. That same day he cut ties with Idzik. (Now a Jaguars consultant, Idzik declined through

a team spokesman to be interviewed for this story.) A few hours later Ryan and Michelle flew to Orlando to watch their youngest son, Seth, a receiver for Clemson, play in the Russell Athletic Bowl. Then Rex abided by his tradition of taking a season-ending trip to Hawaii. This time, though, he packed an interview suit.

THE BIG TREE INN, favored watering hole of the '90s Bills players, is where Ryan had his first beer as the coach in Buffalo: a Bud Light on the house. He was back at the bar last week with Kelly—whose life-sized wood-carved likeness stands at the door—and Thomas. Co-owner Brian Duffek approached Ryan with a cold beer and a warm handshake. “Thank you for being here,” he said. “It’s huge for the city. I really mean that. You’re a Buffalo guy—you just never knew it when you were coaching the Jets.”

Maybe it’s because he drives a pickup and drinks beer, or because he wore a throwback Thurman Thomas jersey at the combine, or because he orders a plate of wings, even though his lap band won’t let him eat more than one or two during a sitting. Whatever the reason, Ryan has already won over the fans and the franchise’s legends.

South Florida. That conversation focused on Ryan’s big-picture coaching philosophy. Whaley, a pro personnel director for the Steelers when Ryan was the Ravens’ defensive coordinator, liked what he heard: Rex wanted to build a physical, defensive-minded team that runs the ball well. “That’s my background, and that’s how we envisioned building this team, especially without having a franchise quarterback,” Whaley says.

Ryan returned to New Jersey on Thursday night. Barely 12 hours later the Bills called to set up a second interview. Team president Russ Brandon also texted Ryan the next day: “The owner likes red wine.”

They want to hire me, Ryan realized. And he liked what he saw—an organization that appeared to be unified and willing to spend money, and a talented roster that included three Pro Bowl defensive linemen and budding stars Sammy Watkins at receiver and Stephon Gilmore at cornerback.

The Falcons didn’t schedule a second interview, their search postponed by the death of team owner Arthur Blank’s mother and a restructuring of the front office. By the time Ryan got back on a plane bound for Florida on Saturday morning, he’d made up his mind: He wanted the Bills job.

“YOU’RE A BUFFALO GUY,” DUFFEK, THE BIG TREE OWNER, TELLS

“Mm-hmm. He fits Buffalo,” Thomas says, letting out a satisfied chuckle. “If this had been his first head coaching job, he’d still be here.”

Though the Bills went 9–7 last year, their first winning season in a decade, the progress wasn’t unfettered. While the defense finished fourth in yards allowed, the offense ranked 26th. Buffalo failed to string more than two wins together for the third season in a row, and coach Doug Marrone opted out of his contract after two years on the job.

One member of the Bills organization described a “180 degree” difference between Ryan and the buttoned-up Marrone. Thomas sees the same. “I don’t think it was a good fit,” Thomas says. “It got to the point where I didn’t want to come around because he was the head coach, but I still came around because I know a lot of the players. Hell, we love being around Rex. You can just feel like a big cloud has been relieved from the pressure players were going through. It’s a fun atmosphere now.”

Ryan had only spent three days in Hawaii when it was time to figure out his next step. His agent, Jimmy Sexton, had arranged for an interview with the 49ers on Sunday and another with the Falcons on Tuesday. Ryan was also set to take a meeting about TV opportunities.

The Bills, meanwhile, had a list of 12 candidates. They started their interviews on the West Coast, talking to Seattle’s Dan Quinn and Darrell Bevell and Denver’s Adam Gase. Ryan was scheduled for Thursday, Jan. 8, at Pegula’s business office in

THE MMQB
WATCH ONLINE
A roundtable
discussion with Rex
Ryan, Thurman Thomas,
Jim Kelly and The
MMQB’s Jenny Vrentas.
At **TheMMQB.com**

During a break in his Saturday interview, Ryan turned to Whaley as they walked toward the bathroom. “Everybody thinks I’m either going to do ESPN or Atlanta,” he said. “We’re gonna shock the world when they hear about this.”

The second interview focused on details, ranging from how Ryan would build his staff to how he’d assign seats on the team plane. When the meeting wrapped up, Whaley, Brandon, Pegula and his wife, Kim, met privately. *This is our guy*, they agreed. *Don’t let him leave*. Meanwhile, Ryan

had turned on his phone and saw about 20 text messages from NFL teams, including one offering him a job, as well as several more texts from his agent.

Too late. Within minutes, Pegula offered Ryan the Bills job, and he accepted without using the other teams’ interest as leverage. They all went out for a steak dinner in Boca Raton, celebrating what Jim Kelly recently described as “a new identity, a new tradition—and the first part of that tradition is having someone who can lead the team.”

REX RYAN wants to make one thing perfectly clear: getting fired hasn’t changed him. Bold? Electrifying? United? *Brash* will do just fine.

On April 6, Jets tight end Jace Amaro reflected on his rookie season and told Sirius XM NFL Radio that Ryan’s 2014 team lacked accountability. To which Ryan says, “He’s full of s---, and I’ll remind him of that when we



REX RYAN

time All-Pro back—took 30 minutes, start to finish. “I’m not a red wine guy,” Ryan says, “but that day I drank red wine.”

McCoy, who’s comfortable running out of both the shotgun and a traditional I-formation, is the kind of player the NFL’s 25th-ranked rushing offense needed. Buffalo also added complementary weapons, signing Harvin to a one-year deal worth \$6 million and breaking the bank with a five-year, \$38 million contract for tight end Charles Clay. Ryan’s promise at his opening press conference to “build a bully” got awkward with the signing of guard Richie Incognito, who’d been out of football since the 2013 Dolphins scandal, but Ryan says Incognito will be “on a short leash.”

FAN FAVES

Thomas and Kelly, among some 80 former Bills who live in the Buffalo area, have welcomed Rex’s style.

Roman, who spent the past four seasons as the 49ers’ offensive coordinator, isn’t panicking over the uncertainty at quarterback, where EJ Manuel, Matt Cassel and Tyrod Taylor will compete. “When I got to San Francisco,” he says, “nobody would touch Alex Smith with a hot poker. They said, ‘You’ve got no chance.’ Well, not so fast. We’ll figure it out.” As in San Francisco, Roman will duplicate drills on multiple fields during practice to maximize QB reps. His offensive vision dovetails with Ryan’s: Control the line of scrimmage and be more physical than your opponent. An assistant offensive line coach for the Ravens in 2006 and ’07, Roman tried to create a mirror image of Ryan’s defenses on his side



of the ball, embodying Ryan’s “organized chaos” principle. Says Roman, “He did call me at one point and say, ‘The biggest mistake I ever made was not bringing you to New York.’”

It’s not Ryan’s only regret. He says he always believed Woody Johnson “wanted me to be his coach for 100 years.” But after the four-win season in 2014, he realized the Jets owner had no choice but to fire him. He says he wished he had spoken up when he first felt himself slipping into a power struggle. “The minute I felt uncomfortable, I should have said something to Woody and made sure he knew exactly how I felt,” Rex says. “But when hires are made after you’re hired, I didn’t want to question that. How can I preach that I’m all on board if I do that?”

Now, though, Ryan is moving on, like the charging buffalo on his truck, full steam ahead. “I want success for Woody Johnson, I do. But don’t kid yourself—we’re gonna try to kick the s--- out of them when we bring our team in. We’re going to try to whip your ass. There are people in that organization who are going to be lifelong friends to me. But this is my damn football family now.” □

RYAN. “YOU JUST NEVER KNEW IT.”

play him. Look, we weren’t perfect, and I never said we were going to be perfect. But that’s a f----- b.s. comment. But, hey, he’s happy that he’s got a different coach in place. We’ll see how happy he is when I play against him.”

Ryan’s goal hasn’t changed, either. “I want to win the damn Super Bowl,” he says. “That’s what drives me. I don’t want to just be known as good. I want to be special. For our team, for our franchise here in Buffalo, that’s what we want.”

The first steps of that journey were taken in West Palm Beach in early March, on Pegula’s yacht, *Top Five*. Whaley, the GM, and Brandon, the team president, were there, along with Ryan and the top lieutenants of his new coaching staff, including Dennis Thurman and offensive coordinator Greg Roman. Everyone quickly adopted Ryan’s confidence, believing they could make a run to the top of the AFC East this season. “We’ve never been afraid of the Patriots,” Thurman says, “and we’re not afraid of them now.”

Confidence rose higher on the third day of the retreat. The group had just wrapped meetings and were on the back deck, drinking cabernet and smoking cigars, when Whaley’s phone rang. “Any interest in LeSean McCoy?” a representative from the Eagles asked.

Philly was looking for draft picks, and without a 2015 first-rounder the Bills didn’t have much ammo to make an offer. But Whaley told the Eagles rep, “Just do me a favor and look at our roster.” The Eagles called back and told him, “Kiko Alonso.” The straight-up deal—Alonso, a promising young linebacker who missed ’14 with an ACL tear, for McCoy, a two-



|| GOLF ||

OLD SCHOOL

With a pure putting stroke and a maturity that belies his 21 years, Jordan Spieth put on a record-setting show at Augusta and stamped himself as America's future star

BY ALAN SHIPNUCK

Photograph by
Robert Beck
For Sports Illustrated



THE APPLE-CHEEKED new face of American golf has a nine o'clock bedtime, drives a 2008 Yukon with more than 100,000 miles on it and dates his high school sweetheart. He volunteers in the classroom of his younger sister, who is on the autism spectrum, and addresses his elders deferentially ("Hello, Mr. O'Meara") even when he is obliterating the field at Augusta National. The only time Jordan Spieth is remotely disrespectful is when he's barking instructions to his golf ball; the poor thing was so frightened, it spent all of Masters week diving into a hole. On Sunday evening, after Spieth's record-smashing performance, a dozen of his friends gathered outside the clubhouse and had a laugh imagining what Spieth (rhymes with *good teeth*) might serve at next year's champions dinner. "Probably something bland, like his life," said lifelong pal Jeff Schoettmer. "I'm thinking a piece of dry chicken and a glass of milk."

Spieth may in fact be the world's oldest 21-year-old—the joke on Tour is that he's so mature his hairline had no choice but to recede prematurely. For all of his imaginative shotmaking and spectacular putting, the defining trait of his victory was the serenity displayed by this old soul. "His composure is Bernhard Langer-like, which is incredible for 21," says Tour sage Geoff Ogilvy. "That's his x-factor."

In becoming the first wire-to-wire winner in the Masters in 39 years, Spieth had to block out myriad distractions. As usual, he overachieved. After he finished 18 under par on rounds of 64-66-70-70, he was asked him how it felt to share one of golf's most hallowed records: Tiger Woods's Masters mark of 270, set during his iconic 1997 victory. Spieth's baby blue eyes bugged out ever so slightly. "Oh, is that what it was?" he said. "I didn't know." Makes sense, since Spieth has always preferred to make history, not study it. At Jesuit Prep in Dallas, he won three state championships and twice took the U.S. Junior; Woods is the only other player to win that national championship multiple times. As a freshman at Texas in 2012, Spieth led the Longhorns to their first national championship in 40 years. Competitiveness is in his DNA: His father, Shawn, was a pitcher and a first baseman at Lehigh; his mom, Chris, played basketball and field

hockey for Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pa. Younger brother Steven is a 6' 6" sophomore guard at Brown who this season averaged 9.9 points and 4.7 rebounds.

But Spieth's ferocious drive is a product of nurture as well

as nature. He grew up playing on the same teams as Schoettmer—a linebacker who last year led North Carolina with 74 tackles—and Brian Wetzell, a receiver with 32 career touchdowns at Fordham. Spieth was a lefty shooting guard with three-point range and a quarterback who rarely ducked out-of-bounds. "He liked to take the hit," says Schoettmer. Before focusing on golf at age 12, the year he shot a 62, Spieth was best at baseball, in which he was a rangy outfielder and a pitcher with a filthy curveball and effective changeup. "He didn't throw hard, but he had great location and he knew how to pitch and how to compete," says Schoettmer. "It's so relevant to his golf game." Spieth can still offer play-by-play from many of the championship games of his youth. "We hardly ever lost," he says. "Winning has been a big part of my life since I was five years old."

Spieth was the PGA Tour's 2013 Rookie of the Year thanks largely to a victory at the John Deere Classic in which he got into a playoff by jarring a bunker shot on the 72nd hole. But last year he was, in his words, "pushing too hard for victories. I got in my own way." This included his audacious Masters debut. He led by two strokes with 11 holes to play but made a series of nervy mistakes and got run over by Bubba Watson. "I played pretty much the entire round feeling different than I've ever felt on the golf course," Spieth says. He was plagued by Sunday stumbles throughout the rest of the season, but in November at the Australian Open he closed with one of the rounds of the year, a 63 on a blustery day to blow away a world-class field. "Just had a level of patience I had not had when I was in contention," Spieth says. Next came a 10-shot romp at the Hero World Challenge in Windermere, Fla., and he carried the momentum into Augusta, with a win and two seconds in his previous three starts.

He was so fazed by the pressure of being a pretournament favorite that he opened with a 64, one stroke off the Masters record. The next morning Spieth backed it up with a 66 that broke the spirit of every other guy in the field. World No. 1 Rory McIlroy, 25, had been the story coming in, as he was going for his third straight major championship victory and the missing piece of the Grand Slam, but by the time he teed off on Friday he was 12 back. After a woe-is-me 40 on the front nine, McIlroy scorched the next 45 holes in 15 under but still came up six shots short, in fourth place.

Spieth's 36-hole score of 130 was a tournament record and left him with a five-stroke lead over Charley Hoffman. The tributes poured in. Dan Jenkins, a fellow Texan who at 85 is the dean of American

DRIVEN

The grip and the swing may not be textbook, but Spieth tied for second in the field in greens hit in regulation.

sportswriters, tweeted, “Jordan Spieth might be the perfect Texas pro: the focus and will of Hogan, the likability of Nelson, and the putting stroke of Crenshaw.”

As it turned out, Ben Crenshaw was competing in his 44th and final Masters, and he played a passing-of-the-torch practice round with Spieth, whom he has long mentored. Caddies are second only to bartenders as observers of human nature, and Crenshaw’s longtime Augusta looper, Carl Jackson, had an insightful take on the kid: “Jordan has the same moxie as Ben, the same fire in the belly. They both got a heart as big as Texas. They come from real strong families. They both have good character and integrity, and that gives a man strength on the golf course. You got to exude that attitude of gratitude.”

Spieth’s enlarged perspective comes by way of his sister, Ellie, 14, who was born with a neurological disorder and spent the first month of her life in the NICU. Jordan visited her every day. “He saw firsthand how some of those kids never got to go home,” says Shawn. Even as he became everybody’s All-American, Jordan realized that, as he says, “in my family it’s never been about me.” He has set up a foundation to benefit special-needs children.

TIGER HUNTER

Fourteen years after Woods won his second Masters, Spieth was rewriting the record book.

“Ellie inspires Jordan, she grounds him, she makes it easy for him to detach from the artificial world of tournament golf,” says swing coach Cameron McCormick, who began ministering to Spieth when he was 12. “She’s a big key to who he is as a person.”

IF SPIETH’S self-identity is remarkably well formed, the man he is now linked with in Masters lore arrived in Augusta trying to find himself, yet again. Woods was ending a two-month exile to find a cure for his chip-yips. He had been holed up at the Medalist Club, in Hope Sound, Fla., hiding in plain sight, the subject of endless furtive glances, in the same manner passing motorists pretend not to be titillated by roadside wreckage. “I have friends who are members there who say two weeks ago he was blading chips across the greens,” former Tour player Brad Faxon said during Masters week. “A friend of mine was out playing and stopped to watch him chip. Tiger hit a couple of O.K. ones, looked up and saw he was being watched, and he packed up and went to another hole!”

Yet when the bell rang at Augusta, Woods showed no fragility around the greens, though his ball-striking was clearly rusty during an opening 73. He followed with rounds of 69 and 68—remarkably,



“We hardly ever lost,” Spieth says of his days in youth sports. “Winning has been a big part of my life since I was five years old.”

the first time since his victory a decade ago that he has broken 70 in consecutive Masters rounds. The performance was a monument to Woods’s grit, and in a weird way as impressive as any of his victories.

His move up the leader board added a little frisson to a third round that was otherwise subdued by Spieth’s relentlessly steady golf. That is, until a sloppy double bogey on the 17th hole cut his lead from six strokes to four. Spieth then missed on the short side on 18, and for the first time all week looked vulnerable. But he summoned a dangerous flop shot—“That just took some guts,” he said, in what passes for braggadocio—and then poured in “one of the bigger putts I’ve ever hit,” a seven-footer for par. Spieth birdied two of the first three holes in the final round, and the rest of Sunday was mostly a coronation. But he didn’t let himself think about the victory until after he made a downhill eight-footer on the 16th hole that preserved his four-stroke lead over Justin Rose.

“I would call that the biggest putt I’ve ever hit,” Spieth said. “Didn’t care about my posture. Didn’t care about the mechanics. It was all feel-based.”

This is not just a putting philosophy; it imbues his entire game. He has a quirky grip—the left index finger rides on top of the right hand and interlocks

A side-profile photograph of golfer Jordan Spieth. He is wearing a dark blue polo shirt with "HYGOLF" on the sleeve, white trousers with a Masters logo on the pocket, and a dark blue Under Armour cap. He has a determined expression and his right fist is clenched in a celebratory gesture. The background is a blurred green golf course.

*When you win on
golf's biggest stage,
the whole world applauds.*

AT&T congratulates 2015
Masters Champion Jordan Spieth.

MOBILIZING
YOUR
WORLD™



© 2015 AT&T Intellectual Property.
All rights reserved. All other marks used herein are the property of their respective owners.

slightly with the right pinkie—and some idiosyncratic moves in his swing. (Johnny Miller, for one, is obsessed with how Spieth's left arm occasionally bends on his takeaway). But it all works well enough that he was second in the field in greens in regulation (75%). More to the point, Spieth has a bedrock belief in what he is doing.

"A lot of guys are looking around for the next piece of information so they can make things more complicated," says Faxon. "He's always looking to make things simpler."

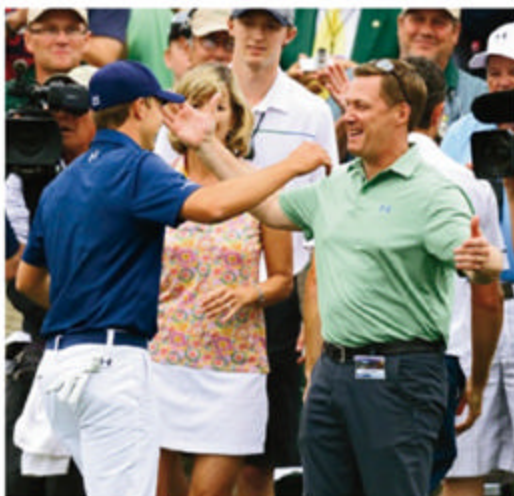
SPIETH IS chasing greatness as hard as McIlroy, minus the self-aggrandizing shirtless photo shoots. He looks slender, but over the last year and a half he has been living in the gym. Spieth's trainer, Damon Goddard, calls him "country strong" and says he can deadlift 380 pounds. Through an emphasis on the core muscles and lower body, Spieth is trying to maintain a clubhead speed of 115.3 mph, which has pushed him from 89th to 63rd on Tour in driving distance, at 292.5 yards a pop.

Spieth has also begun having blood work done to fine-tune his diet, which is why on the course he now snacks on walnuts instead of cashews and dried blueberries rather than raisins. His meals are heavy on vegetables, even though he says he "flat-

out hates" them. For every round he has a prescribed amount of water to drink—at the sunbaked Texas Open it was 60 ounces per nine holes—and during tournament weeks Goddard assigns him a mandatory bedtime based on his fluctuating fatigue. For Mas-

ters week it was 9 p.m., though because of a late tee time Spieth got a dispensation on Saturday to stay up and watch *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, a low-brow comedy that he regrettably calls "one of the greatest movies in the world."

Clearly, the kids are running things now. (On Sunday, Woods got spanked 66–73 by his playing partner, McIlroy, and 44-year-old Phil Mickelson was slow out of the gate before rallying to tie Rose for second.) The Rory & Jordan Show, starring two megatalents who not only top the World Ranking but are also immensely likable characters, is already a hit, as CBS's Masters ratings on Saturday and Sunday were up 48% and 23% over last year. Among those watching at home in Dallas on Sunday was Kelly Kraft, a tour player and frequent foil in casual



"A lot of guys are looking for information [to] make things more complicated," says Faxon. "He's always looking to make things simpler."



games with Spieth. Kraft was impressed by his pal's play at Augusta National but says it's not even close to Spieth's greatest putting performance. No, that came over the winter, when the two pegged it on three consecutive days, warming up by playing "\$100 make 'ems" on the practice green. "We pick out the longest, hardest putts we can find," Kraft says. "I'm talking 80 or 100 feet with tons of break. Day one, Jordan drops his first ball and makes the putt, and just like that I'm out a hundred bucks. Second day, first ball, he makes it again. That's impossible. Day three, he drops a ball and makes it again on the first try. That's not even human."

Kraft paused and then offered what should serve as a warning to the rest of the golf world: "I don't putt against Jordan for money anymore." □

GOOD IN GREEN

Shawn was waiting at 18 with a hug for his son, while Watson welcomed Spieth to an exclusive club.

**ALL-NEW
LOOK**

**BREAKING
NEWS, INSIGHT
& ANALYSIS**

**EXPERT
INSTRUCTION**

SHORT GAME,
DRIVING, PUTTING,
TOP 100 TEACHERS

EQUIPMENT

CLUB TEST:
SEE. TRY. BUY.

**COURSES &
TRAVEL**

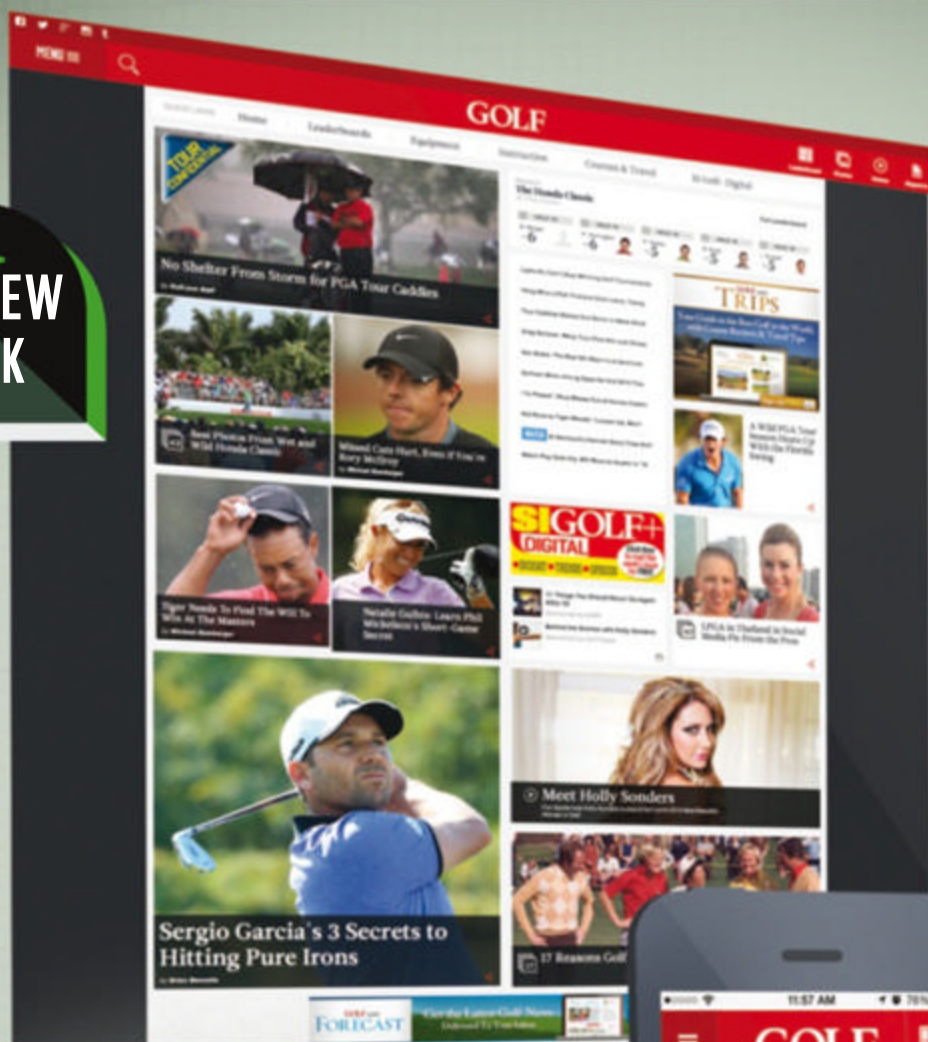
TOP 100 U.S.,
WORLD AND
PUBLIC COURSES

VIDEO

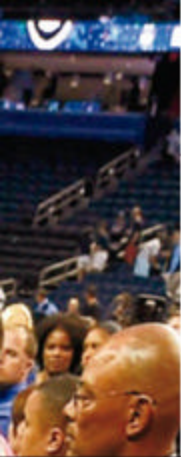
TOUR
CONFIDENTIAL,
YOUR GAME,
TECH TALK,
DEEP THOUGHTS

HOT LINKS

EVERYTHING
GOLFERS ARE
TALKING ABOUT







LEADER OF THE PACK

After winning his 10th title, UConn's top dog discusses John Wooden, his NBA fantasies and coaching (maybe) the best women's player ever

BY GENO AURIEMMA

As told to Richard Deitsch

do, and he and his organization are appreciative of what we do. There's a New England bond there. After we beat Notre Dame 63–53 in Tampa this year, I got a great text from Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, who I know a little bit. He told me, "Congratulations, great job, and I love your program." It's interesting to me that people who have achieved great things and understand how hard it is to be really good at something are the first people to congratulate you. People who have not accomplished much in their lives are the first to criticize you.

I've spoken to Bill Clinton many times since we first won in 1995. He called me last Friday and we spent 20 minutes on the phone. I also heard from President Obama. He offered congratulations and then said, "You know I picked you guys, and I'm happy for you. You beat a very good team. But you are getting old, Geno. You are slipping. It was a great game, but you used to win by much more, so age is clearly catching up with you." He made sure he gave me a couple of shots. But you can't give him a shot back because he's the President.

This year I didn't like [my players] in October, and they didn't like me either. I knew what we were doing wasn't going to be good enough to get them what they wanted. But they didn't want to hear it. How do you tell a group of guys who have won two national championships in a row that what they're doing isn't good enough? They just thought everything was going to be real easy, and they kind of wanted somebody else to do the hard work. But little by little, they started to see what we were talking about as a coaching staff. Last year's team—we had three bad practices in five months, and I remember all three of them. This team we probably had three a week. I knew we had the talent, but I did not know if guys would step up. So when they did come together, it was great to be a part of it.

My players carried me off the court in Tampa, which first started in 1995. Back



MY FAVORITE tennis player of all time is Steffi Graf. I loved watching her play, and I want Andre Agassi to know

that I'm extremely jealous of him. I don't know how many Grand Slam singles titles she won. Twenty-something, right? [Twenty-two.] You know what? I never read anywhere that Steffi Graf was not as good as Bjorn Borg. Seriously, what's the point of that? I grew up appreciating greatness regardless of anything.

There are a lot of people who appreciate what we do. One guy who always calls me before and after our championship games is Bob Kraft, the owner of the Patriots. The relationship started a while ago when I got a nice gift from the Patriots for winning a national title. I certainly love and appreciate what they

CARRIED AWAY

The jubilant Huskies gave their coach his traditional lift off the floor after a hard-fought win over Notre Dame in the national championship game.

Photograph by
John David Mercer
USA Today Sports





then they were overjoyed; now all they do is bitch and moan about how heavy I am. Well, I make it worse because I kind of just lie there like a stone. I don't know that they like it or don't like it, but they do it. They have fun with it. As I've gotten older, I embrace more of the traditions that they think are important.

TO SEE your name next to John Wooden's is overwhelming. It's also troubling and humbling. For every person who writes, *What a great accomplishment it is that you've won the same number of championships as Wooden*, there will be 15 stories saying, *That's a joke, he coaches women's basketball and Wooden coached men's basketball*. Coach Wooden made a comment before he passed away [in 2010]. He said, "I think our accomplishments stand side by side." I appreciated that he came out publicly and said he appreciates women's basketball. He was a traditionalist. He enjoyed the purity of the game, and whether we still have that now, I don't know, but he liked that part of it.

A lot of people who comment on Coach Wooden never even saw UCLA play. They couldn't name anyone on those teams other than maybe Lew Alcindor or Bill Walton. Well, I'm 61, and I saw it all. The Bruins dominated the sport maybe more than we are. They won 88 in a row. [UConn broke that record with 90 straight wins.] What kind of parity existed then in men's college basketball? I rooted for them in every game. When I was in high school [in Norristown, Pa.], I made a lot of money betting on their team against the spread—and the spreads were huge. I remember kids my age saying, "Which would you rather do? Go to a school and play 40 minutes a game, or go to UCLA and maybe not play but win national championships every year." I'd say to myself: I'd rather be at UCLA than any other place in America.

Now it's funny that people say we are the same as UCLA. I just hope that we at Connecticut have done our part to grow this game. I do think there's a level of attention that we're given that helps everybody. And just like it ended at UCLA,



Over the last 20 years, Auriemma has had a near stranglehold on the NCAA field, with 10 titles and five perfect seasons

THE CHAMPIONSHIPS

SEASON	RECORD	RESULT	MOST OUTSTANDING PLAYER
1994-95	35-0	<i>d. Tennessee 70-64</i>	Rebecca Lobo
1999-00	36-1	<i>d. Tennessee 71-52</i>	Shea Ralph
2001-02	39-0	<i>d. Oklahoma 82-70</i>	Swin Cash
2002-03	37-1	<i>d. Tennessee 73-68</i>	Diana Taurasi
2003-04	31-4	<i>d. Tennessee 70-61</i>	Diana Taurasi
2008-09	39-0	<i>d. Louisville 76-54</i>	Tina Charles
2009-10	39-0	<i>d. Stanford 53-47</i>	Maya Moore
2012-13	35-4	<i>d. Louisville 93-60</i>	Breanna Stewart
2013-14	40-0	<i>d. Notre Dame 79-58</i>	Breanna Stewart
2014-15	38-1	<i>d. Notre Dame 63-53</i>	Breanna Stewart

history has a way of reminding you that the same thing is going to happen with us. So you want to enjoy it while you're in it.

I know my comments on the state of the men's college game got a lot of attention, and here is all I want to say on it: I think if I hadn't used the word *joke*, the reaction would have been different. I wish I had not used that word. But I saw something [ESPN analyst] Jay Bilas sent out. He said what I said was harsh but it was basi-

cally correct. So that's how I feel about it.

People ask me if I ever wished I coached men. Yeah, I would not be honest if I didn't admit that I wonder what it would be like to sit in a film room with LeBron and Kobe and all those guys and think about how to beat Spain. Or what it's like to sit in a film room with an NBA coaching staff, thinking, *How are we going to stop LeBron from getting 30 on us?* I am fascinated by people who do things really well that are



BY ANY STRETCH

Battling a sprained ankle, Stewart used her 7' 1" wingspan to grab 15 rebounds and win her third straight Final Four MOP trophy.

four blocked shots, not to mention how many shots she changed. People think it's just about points, but with her sometimes you don't even notice how much she impacts winning. So I think at this point in her career she has been as good, if not better, than anyone who has ever played. But I don't want to compare my best players because they are all unique and did things their own way.

I'm at an age right now where I am not looking at a 20-year plan. I am happy where I am professionally, financially. As long as I keep doing what I am doing and they want me here, I will be here. I don't know if you have the right to work as long as you want, but I'd like to think I will be the first to know when it is time to go.

But this is the great challenge that we all go through as we get older: How do you keep it fresh? How do you make it exciting for everyone? How do you continue to evolve? That's where I think your coaching staff comes in and also the relationships that you have with the players on your team. This past season, and especially this NCAA tournament, I was probably more anxious and nervous and worried than ever before that I would not do a good job for our team. I'm not sure why. Maybe that's why when we did win, I was happier than I had been in a while.

Listen, I'd be lying if I said the grind doesn't get to me sometimes. The plane rides, the next recruiting trip, meetings after meetings. I was in New York City in January walking around Brooklyn for a recruiting trip. It was like 10 below zero, and I'm freezing my butt off, waiting to get into this gym. I'm saying to myself, "What the hell am I doing out here? I should be in Florida playing golf." But I'm still excited and emotional about what I do. When the charge isn't there anymore, then I'll know it's time to get out. But as long as it is, you'll see me around the gym. □

hard to do, and I think coaching in the NBA is the absolute hardest thing to do as a coach in the sport of basketball.

THE NIGHT after I got back to Connecticut, I watched a replay of the Notre Dame game, and my wife and I watched an episode of *Scandal* because that's one of her favorite shows. I like to watch the game by myself, just to see if it was what I thought it looked like. I thought both teams struggled with any kind of continuity, both teams were a little tight, but very good defensively. I thought we each had a really hard time getting great looks. There were stretches of some very good basketball. But in the last seven minutes a couple of our guys made some huge plays, and that was the difference.

I know the questions are coming about whether [junior forward] Breanna Stewart is the greatest women's college player ever. I would say that the numbers speak for themselves. She's won three national championships in her first three years. Her performances in the Final Four show you she is not just along for the ride. Look at what she did after she sprained her ankle [late in the first half] in the title game—and I saw that ankle a couple of days later, and it was blown up. She subtly had 15 rebounds and

When
the going
gets hard,
GO SOFT.



When it's hard or hurts to go to the bathroom, don't wait for relief. Dulcolax® Stool Softener allows more water into your stool, for comfortable stimulant-free relief.

Dulcolax®
Designed for Dependable Relief.™
www.dulcolax.com

Use as Directed
Copyright©Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
All rights reserved.



SAME IS NOT SEXY.

Introducing the all-new LG G Flex2. The smartphone for those who have their own way of looking at the world and vary the definition of sexy. With its uniquely curved design, 13 MP OIS+ camera, and Full HD P-OLED display, it's as beautiful to hold as it is to behold. Experience it for yourself and see how LG is redefining beauty and innovation.

LG G *flex 2*

#VARYSEXY

The
RANKINGS

P. 62 QUARTERBACKS / P. 70 RUNNING BACKS / P. 78 RECEIVERS

TIGHT ENDS P. 82 / OFFENSIVE LINE P. 84 / DEFENSE P. 92

NFL



2015

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

DRAFT

PREVIEW

*Double
Issue*

P. 54 SI 300
THE POWER LIST

P. 56 WINSTON VS. MARIOTA
WHICH QB WILL BE NO. 1?

P. 66 AMEER ABDULLAH
SMALL STATURE, BIG IMPACT

P. 74 AMARI COOPER
TAKING NAMES, MAKING PLAYS

P. 88 SHANE RAY
FINDING HIS INNER SWITCH

MICHAEL BENNETT P. 106
24/7 DRAFT PREP

RYAN GRIGSON P. 114
CONSTRUCTING A CONTENDER

DRAFT LAUNDRY LIST P. 120
ALL 32 TEAMS' NEEDS

MOCK DRAFT P. 122
ROUNDS 1 AND 2 PROJECTED

ROAD TO THE SUPER BOWL P. 126
MAPPING DRAFT PICKS' IMPACT



THE SI 300

The cream of the 2015 college crop, from Amari Cooper (Alabama wideout) to Za'Darius Smith (Kentucky defensive end)

RANK / PLAYER / POSITION / TEAM

- 1 Leonard Williams DT USC
- 2 Marcus Mariota QB Oregon
- 3 Randy Gregory DE/OLB Nebraska
- 4 Kevin White WR West Virginia
- 5 Dante Fowler Jr. DE/OLB Florida
- 6 Jameis Winston QB Florida State
- 7 Amari Cooper WR Alabama
- 8 Brandon Scherff OT Iowa
- 9 DeVante Parker WR Louisville
- 10 Vic Beasley OLB Clemson
- 11 Trae Waynes CB Michigan State
- 12 La'el Collins OT LSU
- 13 Danny Shelton DT Washington
- 14 Shaq Thompson OLB Washington
- 15 Landon Collins SS Alabama
- 16 Todd Gurley RB Georgia
- 17 Marcus Peters CB Washington
- 18 Shane Ray DE Missouri
- 19 Andrus Peat OT Stanford
- 20 P.J. Williams CB Florida State
- 21 Kevin Johnson CB Wake Forest
- 22 Dorial Green-Beckham WR Missouri
- 23 Melvin Gordon RB Wisconsin
- 24 Cameron Erving C Florida State
- 25 Malcom Brown DT Texas
- 26 T.J. Clemmings OT Pittsburgh
- 27 Maxx Williams TE Minnesota
- 28 Benardrick McKinney ILB Miss. State
- 29 Eric Kendricks ILB UCLA
- 30 Jake Fisher OT Oregon

- 31 Michael Bennett DT Ohio State
- 32 Arik Armstead DE Oregon
- 33 Devin Funchess WR Michigan
- 34 Denzel Perryman ILB Miami
- 35 Eddie Goldman DT Florida State
- 36 Bud Dupree DE/OLB Kentucky
- 37 Ereck Flowers OT Miami
- 38 Rashad Greene WR Florida State
- 39 Paul Dawson ILB TCU
- 40 Jalen Collins CB LSU
- 41 Jaelen Strong WR Arizona State
- 42 Ameer Abdullah RB Nebraska
- 43 Devin Smith WR Ohio State
- 44 Owamagbe Odighizuwa DE UCLA
- 45 Laken Tomlinson OG Duke
- 46 Carl Davis DT Iowa
- 47 Nelson Agholor WR USC
- 48 D.J. Humphries OT Florida
- 49 Jay Ajayi RB Boise State
- 50 Preston Smith DE Miss. State
- 51 A.J. Cann OG South Carolina
- 52 Jordan Phillips DT Oklahoma
- 53 Tre' Jackson OG Florida State
- 54 Brett Hundley QB UCLA
- 55 Tyler Lockett WR Kansas State
- 56 Nate Orchard DE Utah
- 57 Duke Johnson RB Miami
- 58 Eli Harold DE/OLB Virginia
- 59 Phillip Dorsett WR Miami
- 60 Cedric Ogbuehi OT Texas A&M

- 61 Grady Jarrett DT Clemson
- 62 Breshad Perriman WR Central Florida
- 63 Henry Anderson DE Stanford
- 64 Ronald Darby CB Florida State
- 65 Gerod Holliman FS Louisville
- 66 Sammie Coates WR Auburn
- 67 Ty Sambrailo OT Colorado State
- 68 Danielle Hunter DE LSU
- 69 Eric Rowe CB Utah
- 70 Derron Smith FS Fresno State
- 71 Tevin Coleman RB Indiana
- 72 D'Joun Smith CB Florida Atlantic
- 73 Alex Carter CB Stanford
- 74 Mario Edwards Jr. DE Florida State
- 75 Quinten Rollins CB Miami (Ohio)
- 76 David Cobb RB Minnesota
- 77 T.J. Yeldon RB Alabama
- 78 Markus Golden DE Missouri
- 79 Mike Davis RB South Carolina
- 80 Clive Walford TE Miami
- 81 Byron Jones CB Connecticut
- 82 Stephone Anthony ILB Clemson
- 83 Trey Flowers DE Arkansas
- 84 Xavier Cooper DT Washington State
- 85 Gabe Wright DT Auburn
- 86 Hau'oli Kikaha OLB Washington
- 87 Damarious Randall FS Arizona State
- 88 Jacoby Glenn CB Central Florida
- 89 Ali Marpet C Hobart
- 90 Cody Prewitt FS Ole Miss
- 91 Senquez Golson CB Ole Miss
- 92 Hroniss Grasu C Oregon
- 93 Lorenzo Doss CB Tulane
- 94 Reese Dismukes C Auburn
- 95 Jaquiski Tarta SS Samford
- 96 Tyeler Davison DT Fresno State
- 97 Anthony Harris SS Virginia
- 98 Lorenzo Mauldin OLB Louisville
- 99 Bryce Petty QB Baylor
- 100 Zack Hodges OLB Harvard
- 101 Justin Hardy WR East Carolina
- 102 Ifo Ekpre-Olomu CB Oregon
- 103 Donovan Smith OT Penn State
- 104 Chris Hackett FS TCU
- 105 Daryl Williams OT Oklahoma
- 106 B.J. Finney C Kansas State
- 107 David Johnson RB Northern Iowa
- 108 Tre McBride WR William & Mary
- 109 Steven Nelson CB Oregon State
- 110 Jeff Heurman TE Ohio State
- 111 Ramik Wilson ILB Georgia
- 112 Rob Havenstein OT Wisconsin
- 113 Josue Matias OG Florida State
- 114 Tyler Kroft TE Rutgers
- 115 Andy Gallik C Boston College
- 116 Kwon Alexander OLB LSU
- 117 Geneo Grissom DE/OLB Oklahoma
- 118 Charles Gaines CB Louisville
- 119 Jamison Crowder WR Duke
- 120 Josh Shaw CB USC

121 Quandre Diggs CB Texas
122 Tyrus Thompson OT Oklahoma
123 Josh Harper WR Fresno State
124 Jordan Hicks OLB Texas
125 Blake Bell TE Oklahoma
126 Travis Raciti DT San Jose State
127 Tony Lippett WR Michigan State
128 Durrell Eskridge FS Syracuse
129 Garrett Grayson QB Colorado State
130 Marcus Hardison DT Arizona State
131 Javorius Allen RB USC
132 Dres Anderson WR Utah
133 Ben Koyack TE Notre Dame
134 Antwan Goodley WR Baylor
135 Lynden Trail DE/OLB Norfolk State
136 Doran Grant CB Ohio State
137 Christian Covington DT Rice
138 Ben Heeney ILB Kansas
139 Jesse James TE Penn State
140 Sean Mannion QB Oregon State
141 James Sample SS Louisville
142 Kurtis Drummond FS Michigan State
143 Vince Mayle WR Washington State
144 Cameron Artis-Payne RB Auburn
145 Nick O'Leary TE Florida State
146 Kevin White CB TCU
147 Jeremy Langford RB Michigan State
148 Ellis McCarthy DT UCLA
149 Corey Robinson OT South Carolina
150 Adrian Amos FS Penn State
151 Taiwan Jones ILB Michigan State
152 Jamil Douglas OG Arizona State
153 John Miller OG Louisville
154 Arie Kouandjio OG Alabama
155 Jake Ryan OLB Michigan
156 JaCorey Shepherd CB Kansas
157 Sean Hickey OT Syracuse
158 Jalston Fowler FB Alabama
159 Za'Darius Smith DE Kentucky
160 Kyle Emanuel DE/OLB North Dakota State
161 Ibraheim Campbell SS Northwestern
162 Ladarius Gunter CB Miami
163 Mike Hull ILB Penn State
164 Jarvis Harrison OG Texas A&M
165 Chris Conley WR Georgia
166 Matt Jones RB Florida
167 Dezmin Lewis WR Central Arkansas
168 Jordan Richards SS Stanford
169 Shaq Mason C Georgia Tech
170 Mitch Morse OG Missouri
171 Jeremiah Poutasi OT Utah
172 Cedric Reed DE Texas
173 Leterrius Walton DT Central Michigan
174 Andrew Donnal OL Iowa
175 Titus Davis WR Central Michigan
176 Donald Celiscar CB Western Michigan
177 Tyler Varga FB Yale
178 Clayton Geathers SS Central Florida
179 Ty Montgomery WR Stanford
180 Kenny Bell WR Nebraska

181 Nick Marshall CB Auburn
182 Davis Tull OLB Chattanooga
183 Austin Shepherd OT Alabama
184 Corey Crawford DE Clemson
185 Hayes Pullard ILB USC
186 Anthony Jefferson CB UCLA
187 DaVaris Daniels WR Notre Dame
188 Derrick Lott DT Chattanooga
189 Rannell Hall WR Central Florida
190 Anthony Chickillo DE Miami
191 Martrell Spaight OLB Arkansas
192 MyCole Pruitt TE Southern Illinois
193 Darren Waller WR Georgia Tech
194 Trey Williams RB Texas A&M
195 Craig Mager CB Texas State
196 Brandon Bridge QB South Alabama
197 Karlos Williams RB Florida State
198 Dominique Brown RB Louisville
199 Max Valles OLB Virginia
200 Devante Davis WR UNLV
201 Imoan Claiborne CB Northwestern State
202 Louis Trinca-Pasat DT Iowa
203 Adam Shead OG Oklahoma
204 Nick Boyle TE Delaware
205 Kyshoen Jarrett SS Virginia Tech
206 Bryce Hager ILB Baylor
207 Mark Glowinski OG West Virginia
208 Josh Robinson RB Miss. State
209 Malcolm Brown RB Texas
210 Stefon Diggs WR Maryland
211 Robert Myers OT Tennessee State
212 Trey DePriest ILB Alabama
213 Deion Barnes DE/OLB Penn State
214 Jermaine Whitehead FS Auburn
215 Erick Dargan SS Oregon
216 Dee Hart RB Colorado State
217 E.J. Bibbs TE Iowa State
218 Ben Beckwith OG Miss. State
219 Joey Mbu DT Houston
220 Miles Dieffenbach OG Penn State
221 Kaleb Eulls DT Miss. State
222 Alani Fua OLB Brigham Young
223 Damian Swann CB Georgia
224 Justin Cox FS Miss. State
225 Rakeem Nunez-Roches DT Southern Miss.
226 Connor Halliday QB Washington State
227 Wes Saxton TE South Alabama
228 Xavier Williams DT Northern Iowa
229 Xzavier Dickson OLB Alabama
230 Greg Mancz C Toledo
231 Terrence Magee RB LSU
232 Shaquille Riddick DE West Virginia
233 Deshaun Everett CB Texas A&M
234 Bryce Callahan CB Rice
235 Austin Hill WR Arizona
236 Cody Fajardo QB Nevada
237 Jon Feliciano OG Miami
238 Tevin McDonald FS Eastern Michigan
239 Taylor Heinicke QB Old Dominion
240 Casey Pierce TE Kent State

241 J.R. Tavai OLB USC
242 Edmond Robinson OLB Newberry
243 Zack Wagenmann DE Montana
244 J.J. Nelson WR UAB
245 Shane Carden QB East Carolina
246 Max Garcia C Florida
247 Jamon Brown OT Louisville
248 Bobby McCain CB Memphis
249 Amarlo Herrera ILB Georgia
250 Cam Thomas CB Western Kentucky
251 C.J. Uzomah TE Auburn
252 Justin Coleman CB Tennessee
253 Randall Telfer TE USC
254 Keith Mumphery WR Michigan State
255 Deon Long WR Maryland
256 Connor Neighbors FB LSU
257 A.J. Tarpley ILB Stanford
258 Aaron Davis OLB Colorado State
259 Julian Wilson CB Oklahoma
260 Rory Anderson TE South Carolina
261 Jermauria Rasco DE/OLB LSU
262 Chris Harper WR California
263 George Farmer WR USC
264 Brett Boyko OT UNLV
265 Cody Riggs CB Notre Dame
266 Leon Brown OG Alabama
267 Frank Clark DE Michigan
268 DeAndre Smelter WR Georgia Tech
269 Bryan Bennett QB SE Louisiana
270 Bernard Blake CB Colorado State
271 Jerry Lovelocke QB Prairie View A&M
272 Eric Tomlinson TE UTEP
273 Tayo Fabuluje OG TCU
274 James Vaughters OLB Stanford
275 Garry Peters CB Clemson
276 Da'Ron Brown WR Northern Illinois
277 Michael Dyer RB Louisville
278 Donatella Luckett WR Harding
279 Trenton Brown OG Florida
280 J.T. Surratt DT South Carolina
281 John Crockett RB North Dakota State
282 Kenny Hilliard RB LSU
283 Jean Sifrin TE Massachusetts
284 Bobby Richardson DT Indiana
285 Cam Worthy WR East Carolina
286 Gerald Christian TE Louisville
287 Martin Ifedi DE Memphis
288 Damien Wilson ILB Minnesota
289 Ronald Martin SS LSU
290 Jahwan Edwards RB Ball State
291 Marcus Murphy RB Missouri
292 Tye Smith CB Towson
293 Deontay Greenberry WR Houston
294 Tony Washington OLB Oregon
295 Dean Marlowe FS James Madison
296 Curtis Riley CB Fresno State
297 Blake Sims QB Alabama
298 Aundrey Walker OG USC
299 Detrick Bonner FS Virginia Tech
300 Christion Jones WR Alabama





THE THOROUGHBREDS

*Jameis Winston,
then Marcus Mariota?
Mariota before Winston?
There's a QB derby
atop the NFL draft,
and even the most
venerable experts are
having a helluva time
handicapping this one*

BY AUSTIN MURPHY

Photographs by
Todd Rosenberg
For Sports Illustrated
Photo Illustration by
SI Premedia



WHAT SORT of warm-down was this? With representatives from all 32 NFL teams in attendance, including five head coaches, Jameis Winston had just finished filling the air with footballs at Florida State's pro day, on March 31. Now, as he made his way off the field, he briefly appeared to be *skipping*, or riding an imaginary hobby horse.

"You know when you're watching the Kentucky Derby, [there's] that one horse that everybody's got their money on," the quarterback was explaining to a retinue of relatives, cameramen, handlers, well-wishers and hangers-on. "But the other horse keeps *going*." At this point he performed a brief pantomime of a jockey—a 6' 4", 231-pound jockey—riding his mount to a commanding lead down the homestretch.

In this equine analogy Winston was widening the gap between himself and Oregon quarterback Marcus Mariota, thought to be the only player who could supplant the Seminole as the No. 1 pick when the NFL draft begins on April 30. In real life, though, it's not clear that Winston is pulling away from the field. Yes, the Buccaneers have indicated that they're leaning toward taking him. But the pocket remains muddy, so to speak. "We as an organization are comfortable . . . with Jameis," Tampa Bay cochairman Joel Glazer told reporters at the NFL owners' meetings—but only

after going out of his way to mention that he and the team's top brass had also spent quality time with Mariota.

A product of FSU's pro-style offense, Winston is widely considered more NFL-ready than Mariota, who piloted an up-tempo spread system in which he neither ran huddles nor called plays—skills he'll need to quickly master at the next level. Still, there are those who believe that between Mariota's upside and Winston's checkered past, the Bucs will err on the side of Gallant, rather than Goofus. True, Winston's career was marked by clutch second-half plays. But he was often the guy getting the 'Noles into those holes in the first place: He threw 18 interceptions last season, to Mariota's four.

Sitting at a Starbucks in Palo Alto, Calif., late last month, Ryan Tollner flashed a thin,

Mona Lisa smile. As Mariota's agent, he'd recently spoken with a former NFL coach who, after a deep dive into his client's college video, had described Mariota as "one of the most rare talents I've ever come across. This guy should be the first pick in the draft. It's not even close."

"Marcus is going to be the first pick," Tollner declared, serenely. "I'll be *very* surprised if he's not."

Respectfully disagreeing is Winston, whose self-esteem remains robust despite persistent questions about his judgment and maturity. Asked moments after his pro day why he should be the first pick, he replied, "Because I'm the best player in this draft."

Such is the concern over Winston: If you ever cut his hair or delivered him a pizza, YOU'VE PROBABLY ALREADY BEEN DEBRIEFED BY SOME NFL GUMSHOE.



667

Combined margin of victory during Winston's 27 starts at FSU, including just one loss, in the 2014 national semifinal.

H OW FRUSTRATING it must be for the 21-year-old QB, who went 26–1 in his two seasons at Florida State, that facts so clear to him are not as obvious to everyone else. Yes, he completed 91 of his 102 pro day passes. But his insistence on throwing under duress—with his private coach, George Whitfield Jr., rushing off the edge, brandishing brooms and tennis rackets—may have backfired. In Winston's determination to show that he's gotten better at keeping his balance and throwing on the run, he called attention to that minor shortcoming.

"When you dropped back, when you were in rhythm, you were money," the NFL Network's Kurt Warner told Winston postworkout. "When you had to move a little bit, you struggled with your balance, your accuracy."

Afterward Winston seemed a tad exasperated by such nitpicking and by the fact that no one will tell him what he wants to hear: that all the questions have been answered, that his will be the first name called by commissioner Roger Goodell. (Never mind that he won't be there to hear it; neither he nor Mariota will be in Chicago.)

Asked after that pro day if Winston was the leader in the clubhouse, a member of the



SLIP SERVICE

Winston refused to lie down at FSU, where he led five second-half comebacks in two seasons.

Bucs' front office would only allow, "That's kind of the perception. [But] we haven't come out and said that. Is it because we have a lot of people here?" (A total of nine Tampa scouts, coaches and executives flooded the zone at FSU's Moore Athletic Center.)

"We were out in Oregon last week; we'll be in Oregon next week," he added. "We're still tying up some loose ends, still got some work to do."

Read: Before coach Lovie Smith and GM Jason Licht link their livelihoods to him, they'll spend every available hour conducting due diligence on Winston, whose past includes accusations of stealing soda at a Burger King, a citation for shoplifting crab legs, involvement in a BB-gun battle during which players shot out \$4,000 worth of windows, and a one-game

suspension last season after he stood on a table at the student union and shouted an obscene phrase. The last stunt was particularly inauspicious considering that he'd been accused of raping an FSU undergraduate in 2012. (Following a flawed investigation that was obstructed by both school officials and Tallahassee police, the state attorney declined to press charges against Winston. In a separate proceeding he was found not guilty of violating the school's conduct code.)

Other quarterback-starved clubs are following suit, which means that if you ever cut Winston's hair or delivered him a pizza, you've probably already been debriefed by some NFL-hired gumshoe. Teams have interrogated his "elementary schoolteachers, bus drivers, [employees at] local restaurants, the lady at the Florida State cafeteria," according to Whitfield, the broom-wielding QB coach who also told SI that at least one team had arranged to plant observers on flights taken by his client, in order to monitor his behavior and interactions—"just to kind of be in the mix, be a fly on the wall."

But how would these "shadows" know which flights Winston would be on? Striking a slightly conspiratorial tone, Whitfield

intimated that the NFL, and people connected to the league, have ways of getting their hands on flight manifests. How else to explain why another one of his clients, Johnny Manziel, was often met at the airport by paparazzi during the last draft cycle?

"Johnny would always wonder, How are there 200 people waiting for me to fly out at 6 a.m.?"

Possibly because they'd all been at the same nightclub two hours earlier?

Speaking of Johnny Football, when Winston opened his scouting combine press conference in February with the preemptive "I know I've made mistakes" strike, followed by contrition and a vow to do better, many observers recalled Manziel's penitent performance from a year earlier.

"We've seen this before," remarked one agent. "Eddie Haskell."

After the Browns used the 22nd pick on him, Manziel began a slow-motion meltdown, and by early February he had checked himself into rehab for a possible dependence on alcohol.

While Winston has no such (known) issues, his judgment remains in question. "When there's a pattern like that, you have to be concerned," says Mike Mayock, the NFL Network's foremost draft expert. Of greater concern to Mayock are the poor decisions Winston made on the field last season, which ended, incidentally, with Florida State's being routed 59–20 by Oregon in the Rose Bowl. In that battle of the 2013 and '14 Heisman winners, Winston was decisively outplayed by Mariota.

In his briefcase at the Seminoles' pro day, Mayock carried "a separate reel" of just Winston's interceptions. "Lot of bad decisions and throws in there," he tut-tutted. "Miami, Louisville, Florida—he was awful in the first half of those games. Now, to his credit, in the second half [of games] he made plays and won.

"If you think these two guys are in the same ballpark, you've got to take the Oregon kid first because he doesn't have any of the baggage. But they have to be in the same ballpark." Mayock believes they are: Three weeks before the draft, he leapfrogged Duck over Seminole in his quarterback ratings.



SI.COM

Visit **TheMMQB.com** to brush up on the draft's biggest names and for inside dirt from Countdown columnist Robert Klemko. Then experience the event live with **SI.com's** draft tracker, with real-time updates and best-available prospects.

MARIOTA WAS in the house at 1 Buccaneer Place on March 16. He spent two hours with members of the Glazer family, owners of the NFL's worst team. Much of that time was spent discussing the *other* football: Mariota played varsity soccer at Saint Louis High in Honolulu; the Glazers own Manchester United, the English soccer powerhouse.

Mariota also got along very well with Licht, the GM. But his most important meeting may have been with recently hired offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter, who is expected to install a fast-paced, up-tempo system—which would be squarely in Mariota's wheelhouse. At one point, according to Tollner, Koetter told the quarterback, "You're gonna have no



3

Multiple-interception games in 41 career starts by Mariota, whose 0.9 INT percentage in '14 was No. 2 in the FBS.

problem learning this when you come back.”

The disadvantages of Mariota’s playing in Oregon’s spread have been, if not greatly exaggerated, *somewhat* exaggerated. Digging into Mariota’s tape, Mayock noticed a multitude of “combination routes on the front side, routes that are no different than what the NFL runs: slant, slide, smash—all kinds of different concepts and combinations. And he’s very good at them.”

While the Ducks had those concepts, Mayock notes, “they [didn’t] ask him to do much reading beyond that half of the field.” If he didn’t like what he saw, he was inclined to move the chains with his legs. “You can’t kill him for that. He wins games that way.”

Mariota ran a 4.5-second 40 at the combine. “The goal was to run a 4.4,” says his speed coach, Ryan Flaherty. Mariota had been running 4.4s in the buildup to Indianapolis. Regardless, the moment he’s drafted, he’ll be the fastest quarterback in the league.

The select group that Flaherty prepared for this year’s combine included, yes, both Mariota and Winston. And yes, they were different, he recalls. But it wasn’t a *huge*

difference. “Marcus isn’t as deficient as people might think, coming from that system,” Flaherty says.

One morning in early March, Flaherty was working with Russell Wilson and Carson Palmer, among others, when talk turned to Mariota and the transition that awaits him. Wilson made this point: “Do you know how many times I was under center last season? *Half the time*. The game is changing.” Palmer echoed his point: NFL coaches are more often letting QBs step out from under center these days, allowing them to play as they did in high school and in college.

In Super Bowl XLIX, Tom Brady was in the shotgun on 80% of his snaps, Mayock points out. Yes, Mariota will need to polish his footwork and lose the hitch in his stride that precedes his release. He’ll grind his gears in the beginning, memorizing plays and calling them in the huddle. But he’s closer to being NFL-ready than many realize.

The Eagles, of course, could plug him right in, Mariota having already played an entire season for their coach, Chip Kelly, at Oregon in 2012. But Philadelphia, picking 20th, would need a king’s ransom to move up high enough to get him. Think Sam Bradford, DeMarco Murray *and* draft choices. And that, Kelly explained at the owners’ meetings, goes against the grain of his more-is-better philosophy when it comes to draft choices: “You get a better chance of hitting if you have more draft picks than if you have [fewer] draft picks.”

So there’s no chance he’d trade up for Mariota? “There’s an exception to every philosophy,” he concluded.

This could get interesting.

Are the Bucs willing to wait while Mariota smooths those wrinkles from his game? They went 2–14 last season; as one Tampa Bay insider says, “They’ve used all their mulligans.” Another factor in Winston’s favor: Lovie Smith fancies himself as a kind of modern-day Father Flanagan, a self-proclaimed “believer in second chances.” He may see himself as just the coach to shepherd Winston into manhood—and into greatness.

Flaherty has worked with, by his count, nearly half of the NFL’s starting quarterbacks. “The great ones and the really, really good ones—they just have *it*,” he says. “You can’t put your finger on *it*.” Those in possession of this ineffable quality “don’t move a certain way, they don’t look a certain way. What it comes down to is: They have the football IQ, they’re really smart, and they’re relentless in the pursuit of being perfect. They’re the hardest working people in the room, and they’re charismatic. People just want to follow them. They’re born leaders. Marcus has all of those traits . . .

“ . . . So does Jameis.”

And down the stretch they come. □

FUNNY SEEING YOU HERE

Indy. Tampa. Every city that needs a QB. Winston and Mariota have been turning up in all the same places this spring.





SI 300
Rankings

Odds are, the next Tom Brady is in this bunch—but also a few Jake Lockers

WITH 2014 STATS



2 **MARCUS MARIOTA**
Oregon (6' 4", 222 lbs.)

4,454 yards / 42 TDs / 4 INTs

PROS Ran a heavy Pistol play-action offense, which translates better to NFL than some think. Tremendous thrower on the run; good mechanics when he's not pressured. Doesn't always bail at the first sign of trouble.

CONS Will find a tougher go in the NFL when first read isn't open. Faces steep learning curve with pro playbook.

NFL COMP *Aaron Rodgers*

6 **JAMEIS WINSTON**
Florida State (6' 4", 231 lbs.)

3,907 yards / 25 TDs / 18 INTs

PROS Dynamite arm; ability to make every NFL throw, including deep-third verticals to opposite boundary. For a college QB, advanced understanding of routes, protections and Ds.

CONS Functionally athletic but not a scrambler/runner per se; more of a pocket QB. Mechanics aren't consistent, and he can be labored with them at times.

NFL COMP *Jay Cutler*

54

BRETT HUNDLEY

UCLA (6' 3", 226 lbs.)
3,155 yards / 22 TDs / 5 INTs

PROS Well-built dual threat with legitimate breakaway speed. Possesses many traits that could eventually lead to NFL success.

CONS The mistake would be in assuming that he can be a pro starter right away. Tends to lock on to first WR; telegraphs reads. Will struggle with turnovers at next level.

NFL COMP *Colin Kaepernick*

99 **BRYCE PETTY**
Baylor (6' 3", 230 lbs.)
3,855 yards / 29 TDs / 7 INTs

PROS Tough, competitive leader. Throws in rhythm with quick release. Has arm strength to make throws to all parts of the field.

CONS Played in spread O. Struggled if first read wasn't available. Accuracy fell off with defenders at his feet.

NFL COMP *Derek Carr*

129 **GARRETT GRAYSON**
Colo. State (6' 2", 213 lbs.)
4,006 yards / 32 TDs / 7 INTs

PROS Mountain West Offensive POY throws a great deep ball; showed confidence under duress and in the clutch.

CONS Slow release, which could prove problematic against NFL pass rushes. Mechanics falter when flushed from the pocket. He's no rushing threat.

NFL COMP *Ryan Fitzpatrick*

140 **SEAN MANNION**
Oregon State (6' 6", 229 lbs.)
3,164 yards / 15 TDs / 8 INTs

PROS Pure pocket passer with an impressive build and ability to make any throw. Very good at throwing his receivers open on deep balls.

CONS Falls apart under pressure. Looks like a rock star when he's protected but completely lost when things don't go as planned. If he's on the run, his accuracy takes a nosedive.

NFL COMP *Zach Mettenberger*



196 **BRANDON BRIDGE**
SOUTH ALABAMA (6' 4", 229 LBS.)

1,927 yards / 15 TDs / 8 INTs

PROS Great arm strength; solid deep-ball threat. Shows patience in the pocket but can extend plays and throw off the run if necessary.

CONS Needs to be more accurate: completed just over 50% of his passes. Lacks experience against top-tier Ds.

NFL COMP *Ben Roethlisberger*



226 **CONNOR HALLIDAY**
Wash. State (6' 3", 196 lbs.)

3,873 yards / 32 TDs / 11 INTs

PROS Excels at deep balls dropped over a secondary. Played through a lacerated liver; endured a coaching change, a lot of losing and some terrible O-line play. So toughness is not a concern.

CONS Mike Leach pupils haven't often succeeded outside the pass-crazed systems they rode to prominence in college.

NFL COMP *Jeff Tuel*

236

CODY FAJARDO
NEVADA (6' 1", 223 LBS.)
2,498 yards / 18 TDs / 11 INTs

PROS Smooth release. Great athlete—one of the best at the combine for the position. Tough kid; will take hits. Good timing on back-shoulder fade.

CONS Played in Pistol O; will have to adjust to NFL offense. Doesn't have a big arm.

NFL COMP *Geno Smith*



239 **TAYLOR HEINICKE**
Old Dominion (6' 1", 213 lbs.)

3,476 yards / 30 TDs / 16 INTs

PROS Precise on short and midrange passes. ODU's offense was built on his making quick reads, which he did well. Can throw on the run; doesn't panic under pressure.

CONS Monarchs mostly ran one-read plays from a spread offense; he faces

a huge transition to the NFL. Lacks arm strength to deliver deep balls.

NFL COMP *Chase Daniel*

245 **SHANE CARDEN**
East Carolina (6' 2", 218 lbs.)

4,736 yards / 30 TDs / 10 INTs

PROS Able to keep his eyes downfield in the midst of pressure and then sling it deep. Athletic enough to

make things happen with his feet and make throws on the run. Not afraid to go to covered WRs; able to make tight-window throws.

CONS Tends to play frenetically and struggles getting enough on his sideline throws. Has to learn to cycle through and read coverages.

NFL COMP *Thad Lewis*

269 **BRYAN BENNETT**
SE Louisiana (6' 2", 211 lbs.)

2,357 yards / 18 TDs / 8 INTs

PROS Lightning-quick release when he needs it. Athletic; can move and scramble. Can make drive throws to middle of the field.

CONS Doesn't spin the ball as well as you'd like. Struggles to make throws when moved off his spot. Pressure him and it's over. Deep ball is a problem.

NFL COMP *Josh McCown*

271 **JERRY LOVELOCKE**
Prairie View AGM (6' 4", 248 lbs.)

2,473 yards / 16 TDs / 9 INTs

PROS Has an NFL frame and a big arm that is best used fitting passes into tight windows over the middle. Showed the ability to improvise and get throws off in an imperfect pocket.

CONS His 4.99 40 time at the combine underscores the concern that his impressive rushing stats were helped significantly by inferior competition and the deception of his team's zone-read O. Struggles with touch and consistent placement on deep balls.

NFL COMP *Logan Thomas*

297 **BLAKE SIMS**
Alabama (5' 11", 218 lbs.)
3,487 yards / 28 TDs / 10 INTs

PROS Smooth throwing motion; dynamic in the open field. Can make all the throws, despite lacking a huge arm. Good on his feet; at times seems impossible to bring down in the pocket. Great body control; takes care of the ball.

CONS Tends to stare down WRs. Balls get batted at line due to his height, arm angle. Likely not a starter.

NFL COMP *Colt McCoy*

**2014 FBS
passer rating
leader**

**MARCUS
MARIOTA**
181.7

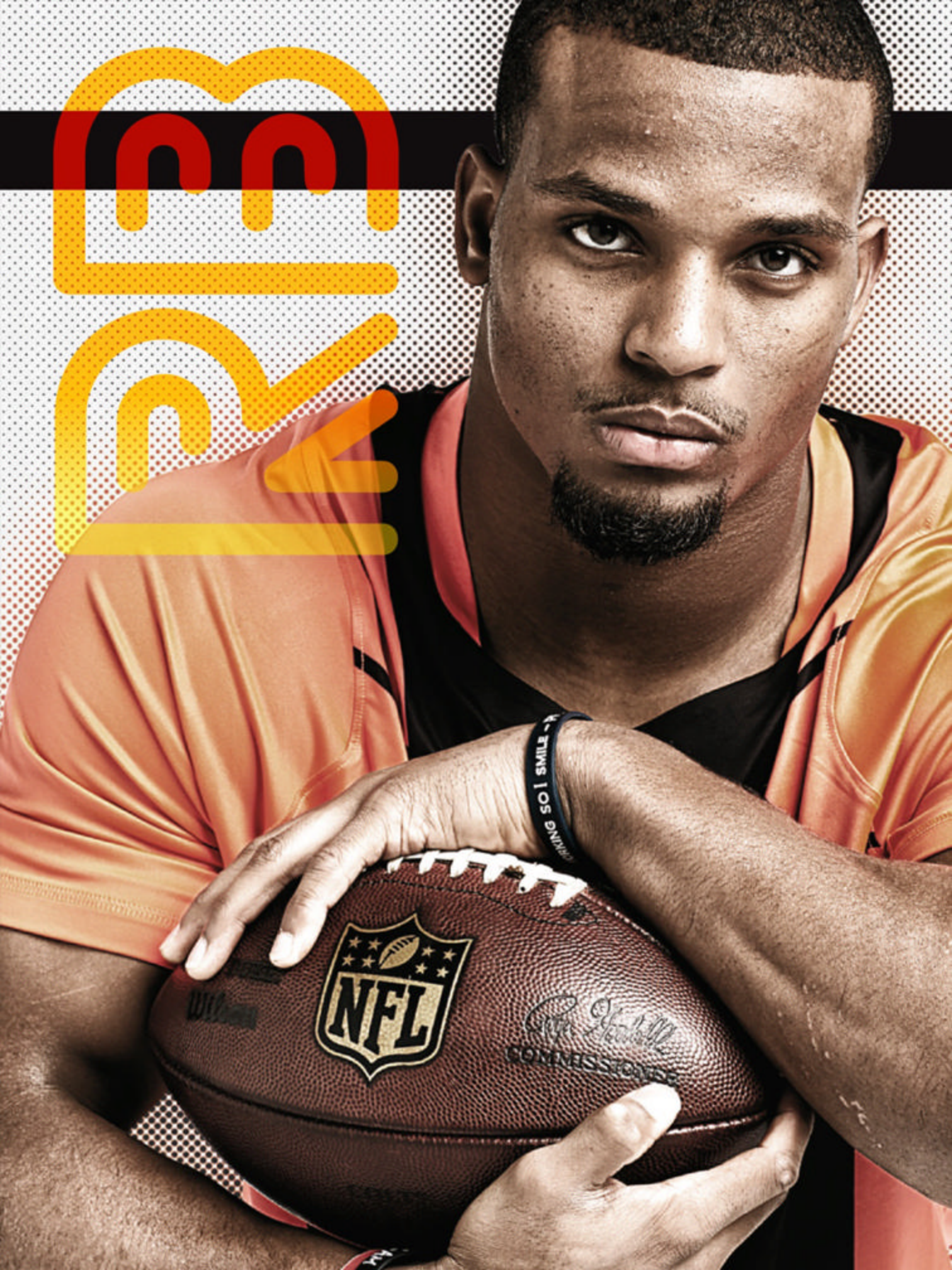
**Top 40 time
at combine**

MARIOTA
4.52

SCOUTING BY

Colin Becht,
Peter Bukowski,
Chris Burke,
Ben Eagle,
Zac Ellis,
Doug Farrar,
Ben Glicksman,
Bette Marston,
Aaron Nagler,
Amy Parlapiano,
Andrew Perloff
and Eric Single







THE NINTH CHILD

Nebraska's Ameer Abdullah has always had the hands and the speed to be a standout receiver or a shutdown corner. But the baby of an accomplished family had his own unshakable ideas about where he would ply his trade

BY BRIAN HAMILTON

Photograph by
Todd Rosenberg
For Sports Illustrated
Photo Illustration
by SI Premedia

→ **IN THE LOBBY** of The Cornhusker hotel in Lincoln, on the eve of Nebraska's 2014 season, Ameer Abdullah was no stranger to anyone. He was the nation's leading returning rusher, a Heisman Trophy hopeful coming off of consecutive 1,000-yard seasons. His keynote speech at the Big Ten kickoff luncheon one month earlier had addressed the "essence of the student-athlete" ("someone who has the desire to educate *themselves*. . ."), which he embodied as an all-conference performer, academically and on the field, who aspired to attend law school. No Nebraska athlete was in greater demand for appearances. He was a new folk hero, the face of a storied program.

So when a middle-aged woman approached Abdullah, who was sitting with his parents and his older brother Muhammad, it tripped no alarms. She explained that she was a big fan and that she would be honored if Abdullah signed her tattoo—which was on her rear end.

Abdullah thought the woman was joking. He nudged Muhammad, incredulous about the request. "And the minute I turned back," Abdullah says, "her butt was in my face."

Perhaps sensing the running back's discomfort, the cheeky admirer pulled up her pants and apologized, but not before providing one of the few light moments in

a year that would be defined by its negative turns: a Nov. 1 left-knee sprain, a decline in production that dropped him out of the Heisman race and, eventually, the firing of coach Bo Pelini. Thus, Abdullah—all 5' 9", 205 pounds of him—finds himself, once again, in a battle with perception as he prepares for the NFL draft. He may have outpaced the small expectations of the big schools back in his home state,

but now, at 21, he must reestablish his worthiness as a pro prospect.

"I went from being on top of the world to being on the bottom," Abdullah says of a season in which he ran for 1,611 yards and 19 TDs. "It [became], What happened to Abdullah?"

AISHA AND KAREEM ABDULLAH had nine children. The oldest, daughter Halimah, became a political writer for NBC News. The next oldest, Muhammad, played defensive back at Alabama State before becoming a lawyer in Birmingham. One sister, Madinah, was an All-America volleyball player at Alabama A&M. One sibling became a banker, another an executive director. And so it went. But while their Homewood, Ala., household teemed with goal-oriented achievers, it was no paramilitary operation. It was loud and lively and loving, and part of that love meant pushing the brood to seek

something more. Kareem told his children: If the best you can do is a C, so be it. But, he advised, strive to do better than your best. Then you set your own standard.

If that message resonated with the first few kids, imagine the momentum down the line. “You don’t want to get outdone,” Muhammad says. “You’re one of nine; you’ve got to try to stand out.”

Ameer was the youngest sibling, but that didn’t discourage him from joining his brother Kareem in tackle football games. On the rare occasion that one of the older kids caught him, Ameer rolled off their tackles and steadied himself with a hand on the ground. “I’d be like, Why are you going easy on him?” Kareem remembers. “And they’re like, Dude, I’m not.”

Ameer’s stature bothered him for only a brief spell in sixth grade, when he says he was “barely five feet tall.” During basketball season, on the ride home after one game, he ranted to his father about how he wasn’t big enough, strong enough, fast enough. Kareem Sr. stopped the car. You know, he told his son, sometimes you just have to go with what God gave you.

“That resonated with me deeper than I thought it would,” Ameer says. “You can’t wish you were like someone else, you can’t harp on what you don’t have. . . . What God gave everyone was 24 hours, every day, to maximize his full potential.”

This became his lodestar. After Abdullah finished his junior season at Homewood High with just one scholarship offer, from Tuskegee, he redoubled his efforts with Otis Leverette, a former NFL defensive end and now a Birmingham-based trainer, who told him to “work harder than whoever works the hardest, to let them know you’re for real.”

Abdullah won the running back MVP awards at Nike’s LSU and Alabama camps that summer and, his confidence stoked, ran for 1,800 yards and 24 TDs in his final season at Homewood. D-I offers trickled in, but still: Neither Alabama nor Auburn saw him the way he saw himself, as a major-conference running back.

As signing day neared, his family urged him to go where he could do what he wanted. That was Nebraska, one of only a few schools that recruited him as a ballcarrier. Abdullah says the in-state snubs hurt, but they served a purpose: “How hard I worked my freshman and sophomore years at Nebraska, that was

the chip on my shoulder.”

“Perhaps it was his all-around ability that put him in that situation” in the first place, suggests his Cornhuskers running backs coach, Ron Brown, who points to Abdullah’s quick hands and speed. “But can he endure the rigors of playing tailback in the Big Ten?”

Pelini guessed he could. By the start of Abdullah’s freshman season he was the school’s No. 2 running back; near the middle of his sophomore year he stepped in for injured starter Rex Burkhead (the school’s No. 5 all-time rusher) and finished with 1,137 yards, earning him second-team All-Big Ten honors. Replacing a Huskers hero was the first step in becoming the next one.



Passes dropped over the last two years (and 48 targets) by Abdullah, making him an ideal multithreat NFL back.

Abdullah kept messages taped to his bedroom door—YOU’RE NOTHING BUT A SCATBACK—even after three prolific years in Lincoln.

AFTER HE SIGNED with Nebraska, Abdullah grabbed a blue marker and scribbled a message, which he taped to the back of his bedroom door: YOU’RE NOTHING BUT A SCATBACK. Even after three prolific years in Lincoln, he still had signs like this hanging around his apartment, referencing other slights—too small, only a third-down back. “People are always trying to limit me,” he says. “Anytime you can disprove a limit or a standard someone has put on you, it’s a great feeling.”

Just as his college career neared its end, Abdullah’s capacity to prove himself at the next level hit a snag. Pelini was fired on Nov. 30 as the Cornhuskers staggered to three losses in their final four games. That ouster disrupted Abdullah’s plans to prep for the Senior Bowl and the combine in Indianapolis; his old strength coach chose not to stick around. Says Abdullah, who always sat next to the projector in meetings, who always liked to be in control: “It was panic for me.”

Maybe it shouldn’t have been. Doing



perceived height deficiency as an advantage. His compact build helps him get out of cuts quickly and hide behind the line in goal-to-go situations. It gives him a low pad level when he enters the hole, advantageous in blowing up defenders.

Whether NFL teams agree is another matter—just don't look for skeptics among Abdullah's past opponents. "His greatest strength is his change of direction," says Wisconsin defensive coordinator Dave Aranda. "He'll be going 100 miles per hour one way, stick his foot in the ground, and 100 miles per hour the other way. It's frightening."

ABDULLAH LEAVES little to chance, including the rise of the undead. At Nebraska, he jokes, he and receiver Kenny Bell stockpiled Gatorade and toilet paper at Bell's apartment—you know, in preparation for the zombie apocalypse. "He has the resources we need to survive," says Abdullah.

He is fascinated by outer space ("It's so big, you know?") but considers extraterrestrial invasions unlikely. Interstellar travel takes

so long, he argues, that humans might not even be here by the time aliens arrive. Then there's what Ameer calls the Strut, a celebratory dance—staggered gait, rocking side to side—that he and brother Kareem concocted as children. Muhammad (who does not do the Strut) describes the dance as "kind of like Pee-wee Herman, but a lot cooler." Says Ameer, "Imagine the most swag walk you've ever seen in your life. *That's* the Strut."

In this way, Abdullah is colorful, a deep thinker with strong opinions. And while he recognizes that this is not a combination that the fall-in-line NFL necessarily prefers, he says that in talking to all 32 teams at the combine he demonstrated that he's smart, but not too smart for his own good. "Sometimes it's not good to be too opinionated," he says. "You don't want a guy who's like, I think *this* is the right way. Who cares what you think, bro? Lace up your shoes and let's go."

If only it were that simple. "Sometimes I feel I get overlooked for things I can't control," Abdullah says. But he's quick to add that he's fine with that. It has kept a fire in his belly, no matter how much of a local hero he's become.

In his ad hoc bedroom weight room last fall Abdullah hung a poster of Muhammad Ali standing over a fallen Sonny Liston, the iconic image from their 1965 heavyweight title bout. Abdullah idolizes Ali, someone who defeated the odds. Every time Abdullah gripped that bench-press bar, he believed he was working harder than anyone else worked that day, ensuring that neither odds nor limits would catch up to him. □

the work was never an issue. In college Abdullah outfitted his bedroom with an Olympic bench press and was twice named Nebraska's Lifter of the Year. After settling on Michael Johnson Performance in McKinney, Texas, as a training base, he honed his technique, prepped for the combine drills and crafted thorough answers for every potential question he might face.

As he did by breaking 1972 Heisman winner Johnny Rodgers's career record for all-purpose yards with the Huskers, Abdullah has since made a strong case against his doubters. He earned Senior Bowl MVP honors in January; and among running backs he had the best three-cone time (6.79 seconds), 20-yard shuttle run time (3.95), vertical jump (42.5") and broad jump (130") at the combine in February.

Which has *still* left him with much to prove. "The height thing, for whatever reason, scares teams," he says. "A lot of running backs [my size] are thought of as not durable. But I've never missed a game."

Abdullah, in fact, has come to see his

RED TIDE

As a Husker, Abdullah broke the 100-yard mark 24 times, second only to Mike Rozier.



SI 300 Rankings

They say the
running back
position is dying.
Tell that to this
stacked group

WITH 2014 STATS

16

TODD GURLEY
GEORGIA (6' 1", 222 LBS.)
911 yards / 9 TDs

PROS Rare combo of power, speed. Most backs his size can't hit the edge with his acceleration and second gear. Patient behind blocks outside; can hit top speed in a flash.

CONS Medicals will be a major issue. Not especially agile in short spaces. Needs to be more exact in his blocking.

NFL COMP Adrian Peterson

23 MELVIN GORDON
Wisconsin (6' 1", 215 lbs.)
2,587 yards / 29 TDs

PROS Accelerates to top speed quickly; effective on draws, delays. Home run potential whenever he hits his gap.

CONS Too many zero- or negative-yard carries.

NFL COMP Jamaal Charles

42 AMEER ABDULLAH
Nebraska (5' 9", 205 lbs.)
1,611 yards / 19 TDs

PROS Outstanding speed, acceleration. Runs low and

forward to pick up extra yards between the tackles.

CONS Struggles in power situations; won't add weight.

NFL COMP Andre Ellington

49 JAY AJAYI
Boise State (6' 0", 221 lbs.)
1,823 yards / 28 TDs

PROS Outstanding balance and jump-cut ability outside; moves between two gaps in time it takes others to hit one.

CONS Loses yardage looking too hard for bigger gaps.

NFL COMP Darren McFadden



57



DUKE JOHNSON

MIAMI (5' 9", 207 LBS.)
1,652 yards / 10 TDs

PROS Outstanding acceleration: Ran a 4.54 40 at the combine but is much faster on the field. True one-cut-and-go runner.

CONS Limited against inside contact; struggles to create in short spaces.

NFL COMP Reggie Bush

71 TEVIN COLEMAN

Indiana (5' 11", 206 lbs.)

2,036 yards / 15 TDs

PROS Speed and agility to bounce outside quickly. Great jump-cut runner; fakes defenders in space.

CONS Not a creator when limited between tackles.

NFL COMP Chris Johnson

76 DAVID COBB

Minnesota (5' 11", 229 lbs.)

1,626 yards / 13 TDs

PROS Built to last (552 carries past two years). Runs through tackles with regularity; could be a short-yardage option.

CONS Minimal ability to turn the corner, break long runs.

NFL COMP Toby Gerhart

77 T.J. YELDON

Alabama (6' 1", 226 lbs.)

979 yards / 11 TDs

PROS Powerful, muscular one-cut runner hits holes decisively. Potentially dominant blocker.

CONS Tends to run too high. Relied heavily on an expert run-blocking line.

NFL COMP Ahman Green

79 MIKE DAVIS

South Carolina (5' 9", 217 lbs.)

982 yards / 9 TDs

PROS Compact frame; ability to get low in his runs and plow through first contact.

CONS Decelerates as he makes his cuts.

NFL COMP Terrance West

107 DAVID JOHNSON

Northern Iowa (6' 1", 224 lbs.)

1,553 yards / 17 TDs

PROS Durable despite a heavy college workload. Almost always falls forward upon contact. Sharp with his cuts.

CONS See above: 1,000-plus college touches. Upright running style.

NFL COMP Rashad Jennings

131 JAVORIUS ALLEN

USC (6' 0", 221 lbs.)

1,489 yards / 11 TDs

PROS Excellent slashing runner with ability to work inside or outside tackle box.

CONS Bad habit of abandoning designed path of a run.

NFL COMP Bernard Pierce

144 CAMERON ARTIS-PAYNE

Auburn (5' 10", 212 lbs.)

1,608 yards / 13 TDs

PROS Known for his patience, as he consistently waits for his blocks to materialize rather than forcing the issue.

CONS Not especially explosive; struggles to break free in the open field.

NFL COMP Ahmad Bradshaw

147 JEREMY LANGFORD

Michigan State (6' 0", 208 lbs.)

1,522 yards / 22 TDs

PROS Versatile enough to play three downs. More reactive than instinctive; sees daylight and goes. Solid receiver.

CONS Not consistently effective after contact.

NFL COMP Tre Mason

158 JALSTON FOWLER

Alabama (5' 11", 254 lbs.)

69 yards / 0 TDs

PROS Big, bruising fullback also has above-average hands and a tailback's ability to read his blocking.

CONS Lacks fluidity as a blocker; has issues moving bigger linemen on short yardage.

NFL COMP Jerome Felton



166 MATT JONES

FLORIDA (6' 2", 231 LBS.)
817 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Patient runner; keeps shoulders square to the line. Wields a wicked stiff-arm.

CONS Doesn't possess great feel or vision. Consistently misses cutback lanes. No second gear.

NFL COMP Alex Green

2014 FBS
rushing leader

MELVIN
GORDON
2,587
YARDS

Top 40 time
at combine

JEREMY
LANGFORD
4.42



177 TYLER VARGA
Yale (5' 11", 222 lbs.)

1,423 yards / 22 TDs

PROS Physical traits to switch from RB to FB, where most teams see him. Powerful upper body, strong legs.
CONS Needs to be rebuilt technique-wise.

NFL COMP *Sam Gash*

194 TREY WILLIAMS
Texas A&M (5' 7", 195 lbs.)

560 yards / 7 TDs

PROS Has the kind of wiggle and make-you-miss ability you want in a player this size, plus the short-area burst to explode through openings.
CONS Has a tendency to dance too much; will overcut.

NFL COMP *David Palmer*

197 KARLOS WILLIAMS
Florida State (6' 1", 230 lbs.)

689 yards / 11 TDs

PROS Tall for an RB but shows great burst despite frame. Tremendous top speed; unafraid of contact.
CONS Hesitant hitting the hole. Too often runs upright.

NFL COMP *Alfred Blue*

198 DOMINIQUE BROWN
Louisville (6' 2", 234 lbs.)

378 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Excellent feel for zone-scheme runs. Innate ability to know where cutback lane will be. Good open-field vision; sees how blocks will play out.
CONS For a big body, rarely puts hurt on defenders.

NFL COMP *Najeh Davenport*

208

JOSH ROBINSON
MISSISSIPPI ST.
(5' 8", 217 LBS.)

1,203 yards / 11 TDs

PROS Earned the nickname Bowling Ball for his ability to bounce off defenders and extend plays.

CONS Only one year of starting under his belt.

NFL COMP *Branden Oliver*



209 MALCOLM BROWN
Texas (5' 11", 224 lbs.)

708 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Tough inside runner with good instincts in tight spaces. Will fight for extra yards, use upper body to break tackles.

CONS Lacks open-field speed and dynamic moves.

NFL COMP *Terrance West*

216 DEE HART
Colorado State (5' 7", 199 lbs.)

1,275 yards / 16 TDs

PROS Impressive footwork: light and spry. Adept at finding and poking holes in the D.

CONS Atypical size for an NFL back. Put up weak performances against stronger teams in '14.

NFL COMP *Darren Sproles*

231 TERENCE MAGEE
LSU (5' 8", 213 lbs.)

571 yards / 3 TDs

PROS Briefly played WR; catches the ball naturally with his hands. Stout runner who can be difficult to tackle. He'll put his shoulder into you.

CONS Experience: Started just one game at RB.

NFL COMP *Dan Herron*

256 CONNOR NEIGHBORS
LSU (5' 11", 229 lbs.)

0 yards / 0 TDs

PROS Opened lanes for future NFLers. Smart fullback with good instincts and strong footwork. Can contribute as a pass catcher.

CONS Very few chances to prove he could carry the ball at LSU: three total carries.

NFL COMP *Derrick Coleman*

277 MICHAEL DYER
Louisville (5' 8", 218 lbs.)

481 yards / 5 TDs

PROS Compact, downhill runner; precise cuts. Embraces contact for extra yardage.

CONS Red flags: three schools, myriad team violations.

NFL COMP *Justin Forsett*

281 JOHN CROCKETT
North Dakota State (6' 0", 217 lbs.)

1,994 yards / 21 TDs

PROS Speed and shiftiness to make tacklers miss in open field. Productive passing target.

CONS Upright runner; susceptible to arm and diving tackles.

NFL COMP *Vick Ballard*

282

KENNY HILLIARD

LSU (6' 0", 226 lbs.)

447 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Stout, hard-running short-yardage weapon with body type to absorb, dole out contact.

CONS Lacks breakaway speed: 4.83 40 at combine.

NFL COMP *Ronnie Brown*

290 JAHWAN EDWARDS
Ball State (5' 9", 220 lbs.)

1,252 yards / 12 TDs

PROS Surprising quickness in the open field belies his 4.80 40 in Indy. Uses strong lower body to keep balance, shake off arm tackles.

CONS Patient—almost to the point of indecisiveness.

NFL COMP *Michael Turner*

291 MARCUS MURPHY
Missouri (5' 8", 193 lbs.)

924 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Elite return man consistently flashes game-breaking speed. Not afraid of contact.

CONS Too small to fight off tacklers regularly inside.

NFL COMP *David Wilson*







THE PERFECTIONIST

Photograph by
Todd Rosenberg
For Sports Illustrated
Photo Illustration
By SI Premedia

While other players are sleeping or partying, Alabama wideout Amari Cooper is getting in extra workouts. Why? He's got a list of rival receivers in his head, and he's willing himself ahead of them, one by one

BY ANDY STAPLES

→ **AMARI COOPER** doesn't allow many glimpses into his psyche. He sheathes a disarming smile in an almost perpetual scowl that keeps reporters at bay. When he does answer questions, it is politely but tersely. Occasionally, though, the receiver offers hints about what drives him. At the Heisman Trophy ceremony in December he presented two of them, and they explain a great deal about him.

The first revelation came in front of a national TV audience. As his mother, Michelle Green, sat beside him onstage, Cooper told a story from his teenage years in Miami. Green had come home after a full day's work and still had to walk three miles, as she did many nights, to the supermarket to buy groceries. She asked Amari, her youngest child, to accompany her. He declined. He said he was tired.

Now, at the Heisman ceremony, the boy had grown into a man. He was about to leave Alabama after his junior season and enter his name in the NFL draft. But he still wanted to talk about that night in Miami. *Too tired?* When Green returned from the grocery store there were marks on her arms, left by the bags on the long walk home. How tired was *she*, who never complained as she supported three kids and even helped raise two nephews after the family moved to the tough Liberty City neighborhood when Amari was in high school? ("I just do what I need to do," says Green, who worked as a cashier

and waitress before settling into her current job as a code compliance officer for the city of Miami Beach.) Years later she had forgotten about that night of grocery shopping, but Cooper still felt guilty about it. "Selfish," he called his younger self.

"I'm still kind of feeding off of that," Cooper said after the ceremony, in which he finished third among the Heisman finalists. The memory of his

mother's dedication illuminates his own maniacal work ethic: his early mornings and late nights in the weight room, his two workouts on days in which some of the best athletes in college football struggled to finish one.

Cooper said something else that night in New York City that helped explain how he willed himself to become the most dominant receiver in college football in 2014. At a table full of reporters before the ceremony, the conversation turned to Cooper's college recruitment, which had been almost nonexistent until the summer before his senior season. Because of a left-hip injury in his junior year at Miami Northwestern Senior High, Cooper had

not been noticed by evaluators who flocked to see his older teammate, quarterback Teddy Bridgewater, in 2010. The evaluators had, however, spotted a handful of other receivers in the national class of '12—which is how Cooper wound up ranked behind so many guys who, he knew, paled in comparison with him.

Cooper never forgot those rankings. “Yeah,” he told reporters in New York, “I remember the names ahead of me.” Briefly dropping his scowl for a smile, he said, “You can look them up.”

So let's do that.

Rivals.com and 247Sports.com ranked Cooper as the No. 6 receiver in the class of 2012. Scout.com had him 12th. Combine the three evaluators, and a total of 14 receivers were touted ahead of Cooper. Meet the fuel for Cooper's on- and off-the-books workouts: The List.

Chris Black (247's No. 4) and Cyrus Jones (Scout's No. 6) wound up playing alongside Cooper in Tuscaloosa. Black hauled in 15 passes for 188 yards and never reached the end zone in 2014—a far cry from Cooper's 124 catches, 1,727 yards and 16 touchdowns. Jones was moved to cornerback in '13, so any frustration that Cooper felt over his ranking probably got worked out at practice.

Cayleb Jones (Rivals' No. 5 and Scout's No. 3, now at Arizona), Shaq Roland (Scout's No. 4, Prairie View A&M), Bryce Treggs (Scout's No. 5, Cal), Aaron Burbridge (Scout's No. 9, Michigan State) and Darreus Rogers (Scout's No. 10, USC) became reliable college receivers, but none came close to matching Cooper. Leontee Carroo

(Scout's No. 11) was first-team All-Big Ten at Rutgers this season—with half as many catches and 641 fewer yards than the Bama wideout.

Some players on The List didn't pan out. Thomas Johnson (Rivals' No. 4, Scout's No. 8) played as a freshman for Texas A&M before disappearing for a few days from College Station (he was found in Dallas unharmed) and then dropping out of the game. Trey Metoyer (Scout's No. 1 prep receiver) was booted from Oklahoma's team and last made news in February 2014 when he was arrested in Tyler, Texas, and charged for the third time with indecent exposure. (He is scheduled to be sentenced for a 2013 arrest in Oklahoma later this month.)

A few in the group did become stars and are competing with Cooper for draft position, although all but one rank far below Cooper

on most draft boards. Houston's Deontay Greenberry (247's No. 3, Scout's No. 7) was better as a sophomore (82 catches, 1,202 yards, 11 touchdowns) than as a junior (72 catches, 841 yards, six TDs), but he declared for the draft anyway. Stefon Diggs (No. 2 for 247, Rivals and Scout) never cracked 900 receiving yards in a season at Maryland, but he is blessed with soft hands the size of oven mitts. Nelson Agholor (Rivals' No. 3) signed at USC with coach Lane Kiffin, who would get fired in 2013 and land at Alabama as offensive coordinator. Agholor would thrive (104 catches, 1,313 receiving yards, 12 TDs) in his only season under Steve Sarkisian, while Kiffin would build the 2014 Crimson Tide attack around Cooper.

What impressed him about Cooper, Saban says, was his ability to “CHANGE DIRECTION AND GET OUT OF A BREAK—the quickness, the acceleration.”



31

Cooper set a Crimson Tide record for TD receptions while helping Bama win one national and two SEC titles.

The only member of the receiving class of 2012 who seriously threatens Cooper's position in the draft is the player all three recruiting services declared the nation's No. 1 overall prospect. Dorial Green-Beckham is 6' 5" and 237 pounds. The 6' 1", 211-pound Cooper is faster—4.42 in the 40, to Green-Beckham's 4.49—though not nearly enough to offset Green-Beckham's size advantage. Still, while Cooper was putting in extra workouts and dominating the SEC, Green-Beckham was getting thrown off the team at Missouri for marijuana offenses and for an incident in which he was accused of domestic violence but not charged because witnesses declined to testify. (Leading up to the draft, he said, “I'm young. I made mistakes.”) The only season in which both receivers played major roles on their college teams was '13. Green-Beckham led the Tigers with 59 catches for 883 yards and 12 touchdowns. Cooper led Alabama with 45 catches for 736 yards and four TDs. It was his least productive season in Tuscaloosa. But while Green-Beckham sat out '14 after transferring to Oklahoma, Cooper finished third in the nation in receiving yards per game (123.4).

Cooper's main competition for the top receiver slot in the draft doesn't come, how-



ever, from his own recruiting class. When Cooper signed with Alabama, Kevin White had just finished his freshman season at Lackawanna (Pa.) College, a juco. He later transferred to West Virginia, where he had a spectacular senior year with 109 receptions and 1,447 receiving yards (third and sixth, respectively, in the nation). If the predraft process had camps, as college recruiting does, Cooper and White might stage an epic showdown against some of the best cornerbacks in the draft. That would probably please Cooper, who forged his reputation at an Alabama camp in July 2011.

COOPER HAD raised his profile on the seven-on-seven circuit in the spring of 2011 and earned a handful of scholarship offers, but, he recalls, most college coaches asked the same question: “Where’s your film?” Because the hip injury had cost him so much of his junior season, Cooper had a disappointing answer: “I kept telling them, ‘I don’t have it.’”

What little action there was of Cooper on tape in 2010, however, hadn’t gone completely unnoticed. Miami Central High defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Luther Campbell was impressed by Cooper

recruiters took notice. Hall of Fame receiver Cris Carter, whose son, Duron, was on Alabama’s roster at the time, began waving Tide coaches toward Cooper. Their evaluation didn’t take long. “Nick Saban was on him like white on rice,” Campbell says. The coach knew he had seen a future star.

“We’ve had some good receivers in our camps through the years, but he may have been the most impressive, to me, in terms of his ability to change direction and get out of a break—the quickness, the acceleration, the speed,” Saban says. “Good hands. Hard worker. I walked away from that camp saying, You know, this guy may be the best receiver we’ve ever had in our camps. And we’ve had some pretty good ones.”

Cooper proved Saban correct, smashing the Crimson Tide’s career records for receptions (228), receiving yards (3,463) and touchdown catches (31) while helping Bama win two SEC titles and the 2012 national championship. But even when he owned the defensive backs of the SEC, Cooper didn’t stop trying to emulate his mother’s quiet work ethic.

While other draft-eligible receivers did ordinary pull-ups before the combine, Cooper posted a video on Instagram of himself clapping after rising above the bar on each pull-up. While others rested or went out on the town, he sneaked back into the weight room for extra box jumps. Cooper might not offer many explanations for his unmatched drive, but his production offers abundant evidence of its existence. “That guy is on a mission,” says Campbell. “I don’t know what that mission is, but he’s on it.”

The mission, at least for now, isn’t so hard to figure out. Cooper has to keep beating those other receivers on The List, so no one but he is ever No. 1 again. □

while watching video before his team played Northwestern that season. “If they get the ball to that guy, *man*,” Campbell remembers thinking. “Please don’t throw the ball to him.” Campbell, the former 2 Live Crew rapper and outspoken First Amendment advocate, was hired by Northwestern before the 2011 season, and he was with the group of Bulls players who trekked to Tuscaloosa for that Alabama camp. Campbell knew that a healthy Cooper, who occasionally played safety for him, would tear up any cornerback. When Cooper did just that at camp, the college

BALL MAGNET

Whether at the combine this winter (far left) or against A&M last fall, Cooper was sure-handed.



**The 2014 wideout
crop was top class.
This group
could be better
WITH 2014 STATS**

4 KEVIN WHITE
West Virginia (6' 3", 215 lbs.)
109 rec / 1,447 yards / 10 TDs

PROS Wins speed battles downfield against elite DBs. Prototype X-is WR who tilts coverage his way.

CONS Doesn't show track speed off snap. Not always willing to dive into traffic.

NFL COMP *Larry Fitzgerald*

7 AMARI COOPER
Alabama (6' 1", 211 lbs.)
124 rec / 1,727 yards / 16 TDs

PROS Knows how to create



space. Bursts out of routes. Unafraid of traffic. Capable with entire route tree.

CONS Probably will never be a great run blocker; could be a little more physical.

NFL COMP *Jordy Nelson*

9 DEVANTE PARKER
Louisville (6' 3", 209 lbs.)

43 rec / 855 yards / 5 TDs

PROS Explosive in the air. Shows a feel for the sideline, making him a reliable back-shoulder or end zone target.

CONS Not always able to hold his route when faced with body contact.

NFL COMP *Alshon Jeffery*

22 DORIAL GREEN-BECKHAM
Missouri (6' 5", 227 lbs.)

59 rec / 883 yards / 12 TDs

PROS Comes off the snap with smooth acceleration. Physical enough to make catches with CBs hanging all over him.

**2014 FBS
receptions
leader**

**AMARI
COOPER
124**

**Top 40 time
at combine**

**J.J.
NELSON
4.28**

CONS Off-field issues require serious cross-checking.

NFL COMP *Plaxico Burress*

33 DEVIN FUNCHESS
Michigan (6' 4", 232 lbs.)

62 rec / 733 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Freakishly defined upper body, wide lower base—looks more like a TE. If you're going to play press against him, you'd better mean it.

CONS Less smooth in short spaces. Inconsistent hands.

NFL COMP *Kelvin Benjamin*

38 RASHAD GREENE
Florida State (5' 11", 182 lbs.)

99 rec / 1,365 yards / 7 TDs

PROS Lines up credibly at X, Y and Z positions. Can set the bar in vertical battles. Smooth gliding stride; tracks and adjusts to the ball well.

CONS Weak blocker. Doesn't fit the profile of a No. 1 WR.

NFL COMP *Doug Baldwin*

41



JAELEN STRONG

ARIZONA STATE
(6' 2", 217 LBS.)

82 rec / 1,165 yards / 10 TDs

PROS Expanded catch radius with inconsistent ASU QBs. Good upper-body strength.

CONS Tends to lope.

NFL COMP *Muhsin Muhammad*

43

DEVIN SMITH
Ohio State (6' 0", 196 lbs.)

33 rec / 931 yards / 12 TDs

PROS Simply incredible when the ball is in the air, tracking it as well as any college WR you'll see. Draws penalties.

CONS Less of a sure thing on short, intermediate routes. Will have to get better at reading defenses.

NFL COMP *Torrey Smith*

47

NELSON AGHOLOR
USC (6' 0", 198 lbs.)

104 rec / 1,313 yards / 12 TDs

PROS Sees field well; return game may be what gets him on the field quickest in NFL.

CONS In a nutshell, strength. Gets banged around outside.

NFL COMP *Jarvis Landry*

55

TYLER LOCKETT
Kansas State (5' 10", 182 lbs.)

106 rec / 1,515 yards / 11 TDs

PROS Outstanding routes; knows how to stick his foot in the ground, make a decisive cut. Dynamite return man.

CONS Will be limited to the slot due to his size.

NFL COMP *Kenny Stills*

59

PHILLIP DORSETT
Miami (5' 10", 185 lbs.)

36 rec / 871 yards / 10 TDs

PROS His 4.33 40 mark at the combine proved he can fly. So, too, did his 24.2 yards per catch last season.

CONS Questions about durability (right knee).

NFL COMP *Ted Ginn Jr.*

62

BRESHAD PERRIMAN
Central Florida (6' 2", 212 lbs.)

50 rec / 1,044 yards / 9 TDs

PROS Brett's son is an outstanding deep threat, adept at using size and cutting ability to get under coverage on slants and drags.

CONS Will need to round out his route knowledge.

NFL COMP *Sidney Rice*

66

SAMMIE COATES
Auburn (6' 1", 212 lbs.)

34 rec / 741 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Great straight-line burst; ability to jostle CB and establish position downfield. Tracks ball well at top speed.

CONS Work in progress, drops far too many passes.

NFL COMP *Torrey Smith*

101

JUSTIN HARDY
East Carolina (5' 10", 192 lbs.)

121 rec / 1,494 yards / 10 TDs

PROS All-time FBS receptions leader is one of draft's best route runners. Can win jump balls against bigger DBs.

CONS Lacks athleticism of a pro-caliber receiver.

NFL COMP *Stedman Bailey*

108

TRE MCBRIDE
William & Mary (6' 0", 210 lbs.)

64 rec / 809 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Has a truly special ability to adjust to the ball in the air. Not afraid to work over the middle and take big blows.

CONS His 4.4 speed rarely shows on tape; won't run away from NFL defenders.

NFL COMP *Pierre Garçon*

119

JAMISON CROWDER
Duke (5' 8", 185 lbs.)

85 rec / 1,044 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Very good at getting free from press coverage at the line with head and foot fakes. Natural pick player.

CONS May need the space of the slot to play at NFL level.

NFL COMP *Harry Douglas*

123

JOSH HARPER
Fresno State (6' 1", 191 lbs.)

90 rec / 1,097 yards / 7 TDs

PROS Need to move the chains? Here's your guy. Plays as if he has glue on his hands, in traffic or on the run.

CONS Aside from his hands, nothing jumps off the tape. Will rarely threaten deep.

NFL COMP *Jason Avant*

127

TONY LIPPETT

MICHIGAN STATE
(6' 2", 192 LBS.)

65 rec / 1,198 yards / 11 TDs

PROS Physical, not afraid of contact. Good route runner.

His length would be coveted at DB if he's open to switching to his part-time college position.

CONS May struggle to get open against pro defenders.

NFL COMP *Michael Jenkins*





132 DRES ANDERSON
Utah (6' 1", 187 lbs.)

64 rec / 355 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Flipper's kid has a knack for pulling away from DBs in space—and not just with speed. Adjusts routes to zone defenses well.

CONS Needs to bulk up for NFL. Bad drops on occasion.

NFL COMP *Chris Givens*

134 ANTWAN GOODLEY
Baylor (5' 10", 209 lbs.)

60 rec / 830 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Explosive, with quick-twitch movements. Has toughness to work in traffic from slot, on vertical routes.

CONS Lacks height, thick upper body. Poor blocker.

NFL COMP *Steve Smith*

143 VINCE MAYLE
Wash. State (6' 2", 224 lbs.)

106 rec / 1,483 yards / 9 TDs

PROS Huge target, which makes him useful on slants, smoke screens. Doesn't shy from contact over middle.

CONS For his size, far too weak against press coverage.

NFL COMP *Sidney Rice*

165

CHRIS CONLEY
GEORGIA (6' 2", 213 LBS.)

36 rec / 657 yards / 8 TDs

PROS Dazzled at the combine. Can make acrobatic catches with his A-plus body control.

CONS Not a lot of make-you-miss moves in space.

NFL COMP *Ricardo Lockette*

167 DEZMIN LEWIS
Central Ark. (6' 4", 214 lbs.)

64 rec / 945 yards / 9 TDs

PROS Great at catching with hands extended, bringing the ball into his body. Tracks well.

CONS Rarely gets behind DBs without play-design help.

NFL COMP *James Jones*

175 TITUS DAVIS
Central Mich. (6' 1", 196 lbs.)

60 rec / 980 yards / 13 TDs

PROS Made a name for himself with route-running, soft hands. Maintains awareness for quick sideline catches.

CONS Top-end speed (4.51 40) is an issue. Took advantage of mediocre MAC defenses.

NFL COMP *Richard Matthews*

179 TY MONTGOMERY
Stanford (6' 0", 221 lbs.)

61 rec / 604 yards / 3 TDs

PROS Ideal size for an NFL WR: long arms and broad frame. Can play anywhere on the field.

CONS Allows ball to get into his pads way too often.

NFL COMP *Jacoby Jones*

180 KENNY BELL
Nebraska (6' 1", 197 lbs.)

47 rec / 788 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Fights for balls in tight spaces. Not a big WR but had impressive open-field blocks.

CONS Needs polish as route runner. Must add weight.

NFL COMP *Kenny Stills*

187 DAVARIS DANIELS
Notre Dame (6' 1", 201 lbs.)

***49 rec / 745 yards / 7 TDs**

PROS Long frame; good hands. Grew up around NFL. (Dad is retired DE Phillip Daniels.)

CONS His 4.62 40 at combine was 19th out of 20 WRs.

NFL COMP *Greg Salas*

189 RANNELL HALL
Central Florida (6' 0", 198 lbs.)
49 rec / 500 yards / 0 TDs
PROS Swiss Army knife spent time as college WR, RB, KR. Solid agility; good football IQ.
CONS Doesn't have top-tier size. Plagued by drops in '14.
NFL COMP *Robert Woods*

193 DARREN WALLER
Georgia Tech (6' 6", 238 lbs.)
26 rec / 442 yards / 6 TDs
PROS Presents matchup problem with his height, athleticism (4.46 40; 37" vertical) and body control.
CONS He's a project. Yellow Jackets' O didn't require him to know many routes.
NFL COMP *Martavis Bryant*

200 DEVANTE DAVIS
UNLV (6' 3", 220 lbs.)
34 rec / 599 yards / 4 TDs
PROS Quick; he's a good downfield receiver. Solid footwork at sideline and near back of end zone.
CONS Lacks speed. Doesn't have the best hands.
NFL COMP *Riley Cooper*

210 STEFON DIGGS
Maryland (6' 0", 195 lbs.)
62 rec / 792 yards / 5 TDs
PROS Physical enough to go up in traffic and come down with the ball. Shows ability to make plays in the slot; could be effective kick returner.
CONS Overly emotional; takes self out of games at times.
NFL COMP *Brandon LaFell*

235 AUSTIN HILL
Arizona (6' 3", 212 lbs.)
49 rec / 635 yards / 4 TDs
PROS Physical player who can get his big hands on the ball. Dedicated to the weight room.
CONS Still trying to regain speed after torn left ACL.
NFL COMP *Davante Adams*

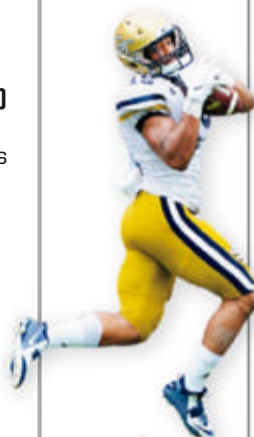
244 J.J. NELSON
UAB (5' 10", 156 lbs.)
35 rec / 655 yards / 4 TDs
PROS Fastest man at combine (4.28 40) shows great balance along sideline. Good vision for the holes in a D.
CONS Slight frame makes broken tackles a rarity.
NFL COMP *De'Anthony Thomas*

254 KEITH MUMPHERY
Michigan State (6' 0", 215 lbs.)
26 rec / 495 yards / 3 TDs
PROS Good body control; makes difficult catches off balance. Strong, physical runner. Team leader and role model at MSU.
CONS Doesn't consistently create separation.
NFL COMP *LaVon Brazill*

255 DEON LONG
Maryland (6' 0", 192 lbs.)
51 rec / 575 yards / 2 TDs
PROS Impressed at East-West Shrine Game despite meager size by attacking passes in air.
CONS Unlikely to fly past many DBs (4.51 40). Transferred thrice—and he'll soon be 24.
NFL COMP *Kenbrell Thompson*

262 CHRIS HARPER
California (5' 11", 175 lbs.)
52 rec / 634 yards / 6 TDs
PROS Can make DBs miss in space and rack up YAC. Quick feet allow him to break off routes, create separation.
CONS Physical CBs can push him off his routes.
NFL COMP *Andre Roberts*

263 GEORGE FARMER
USC (6' 1", 220 lbs.)
25 rec / 314 yards / 4 TDs
PROS Early entrant has athleticism to be an NFL WR, even if he barely flashed it (30 career catches) at USC.
CONS Outside of Notre Dame game (2 TDs), there's little to suggest he's pro-ready.
NFL COMP *Frankie Hammond*



268
DEANDRE SMELTER
GEORGIA TECH
(6' 2", 226 LBS.)

35 rec / 715 yards / 7 TDs

PROS Fast and physical; capable of fighting off DBs for a pass or leaping to grab it at its high point.

CONS Tore left ACL in college finale. NFL teams must evaluate his recovery.
NFL COMP *Marques Colston*

276 DA'RON BROWN
Northern Illinois (6' 0", 205 lbs.)
68 rec / 1,065 yards / 6 TDs
PROS Will make a name for himself with his outstanding ability to make catches and his lack of drops.
CONS Lacks separation and clear athleticism.
NFL COMP *Jarvis Landry*

278 DONATELLA LUCKETT
Harding (6' 0", 211 lbs.)
23 rec / 602 yards / 5 TDs
PROS Plays big and physical even though he's not very tall. Adjusts well to ball mid-air. Wields a vicious stiff-arm.
CONS Ran limited route tree—mostly smoke/fly routes.
NFL COMP *Andre Roberts*

285 CAM WORTHY
East Carolina (6' 2", 211 lbs.)
55 rec / 1,016 yards / 4 TDs
PROS Excels at using his frame to close out DBs and win jump balls and fade patterns toward the sideline. Physical runner after the catch.
CONS Murky details of his two-game suspension will give teams pause.
NFL COMP *Anquan Boldin*

293 DEONTAY GREENBERRY
Houston (6' 3", 200 lbs.)
72 rec / 841 yards / 6 TDs
PROS Great body control; makes contested grabs. Has the athleticism to catch a slant and take it for six.
CONS Will have to learn how to run NFL routes.
NFL COMP *Marquess Wilson*

300 CHRISTION JONES
Alabama (5' 11", 185 lbs.)
19 rec / 264 yards / 1 TD
PROS Willing tackler on special teams, enthusiastic blocker looking for highlight-reel hits.
CONS Struggled with fumbles.
NFL COMP *Dwayne Harris*

SI 300 Rankings

From pure blockers
to seam busters—
the position evolves

WITH 2014 STATS



27

MAXX WILLIAMS
Minnesota (6' 4", 249 lbs.)
36 rec / 569 yards / 8 TDs

PROS Freakishly athletic field stretcher. Tough to tackle—known to hurdle defenders.
CONS Needs to hone route-running. Cannot be counted on as an in-line blocker.
NFL COMP *Kyle Rudolph*

80

CLIVE WALFORD
Miami (6' 4", 251 lbs.)
44 rec / 676 yards / 7 TDs

PROS Reliable (and getting better) as a blocker. Can get past a safety or shake a LB.
CONS Drops have been an issue in the past.
NFL COMP *Brent Celek*

110

JEFF HEUERMAN
Ohio State (6' 5", 254 lbs.)
17 rec / 207 yards / 2 TDs

PROS Good hands; solid route runner. Strong enough to tie up defenders at the line.

CONS Play strength doesn't match weight-room strength. Often injured.
NFL COMP *Scott Chandler*

114

TYLER KROFT
Rutgers (6' 5", 246 lbs.)
24 rec / 269 yards / 0 TDs

PROS Former high school WR knows how to get open. Willing to fight for extra yards.
CONS Not ready to block bigger, stronger defenders.
NFL COMP *Luke Willson*

125

BLAKE BELL
Oklahoma (6' 6", 252 lbs.)
16 rec / 214 yards / 4 TDs

PROS So-called Bell-dozer moves well for his frame.
CONS Not ready to be a consistent downfield threat.
NFL COMP *Heath Miller*

133

BEN KOYACK
Notre Dame (6' 5", 255 lbs.)
30 rec / 317 yards / 2 TDs

2014 FBS
touchdown
leaders

**E.J. BIBBS
& MAXX
WILLIAMS,
TIED WITH
8**

Top 40 time
at combine

**MYCOLE
PRUITT
4.58**

PROS Size and frame to be effective in running/passing games. Soft hands, will catch the ball in traffic.
CONS Not explosive after the catch. Lacks big-play ability.
NFL COMP *Crockett Gillmore*

139

JESSE JAMES
Penn State (6' 7", 261 lbs.)
38 rec / 396 yards / 3 TDs

PROS Long body. Athletic for his size. Good hands. Played well in pressure situations.
CONS Not a great blocker. Probably left PSU too soon.
NFL COMP *Levine Toilolo*

145

NICK O'LEARY
Florida State (6' 3", 252 lbs.)
48 rec / 618 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Jack Nicklaus's grandson has excellent hands, fantastic catch radius. Adjusts to balls in incredible ways.
CONS Can be lazy.
NFL COMP *Chris Cooley*



192

MYCOLE PRUITT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS (6' 2", 251 LBS.)

81 rec / 861 yards / 13 TDs

PROS Elite measurables; one of the secret stars of the combine. Moves like a WR in space.
CONS Rounds routes. Issues with high-pointing ball.
NFL COMP David Thomas

204 NICK BOYLE Delaware (6' 4", 268 lbs.)

37 rec / 304 yards / 4 TDs

PROS Has the size to be a great blocker with the athleticism to still haul in catches.
CONS Not the quickest; ran a 5.04 40 at the combine.
NFL COMP Brent Celek

217 E.J. BIBBS Iowa State (6' 2", 258 lbs.)

45 rec / 382 yards / 8 TDs

PROS Bona fide red zone threat.

Excellent hands. Works well in tight spaces.

CONS Doesn't pose downfield threat. Not physical or big enough to be an in-line TE.
NFL COMP Orson Charles

227 WES SAXTON S. Alabama (6' 3", 248 lbs.)

20 rec / 155 yards / 0 TDs

PROS Natural hands catcher. Was a WR in high school and can still stop and start well for his size.
CONS Lacks effort blocking at times. Rounds some routes.
NFL COMP Fred Davis

240 CASEY PIERCE Kent State (6' 4", 242 lbs.)

60 rec / 641 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Blocks with a wide base; has good hand placement. Held his own against a tough '14 college schedule.
CONS Doesn't create much separation or pick up many yards after the catch.
NFL COMP Anthony Fasano

251 C.J. UZOMAH Auburn (6' 5", 264 lbs.)

11 rec / 145 yards / 3 TDs

PROS No. 3 all time in TDs among Tigers TEs, despite Auburn's limiting offense. Could do even better in NFL.
CONS Massive target, but doesn't use his frame as well as he could. Lets the ball get in on his body.
NFL COMP Alex Smith

253 RANDALL TELFER USC (6' 4", 250 lbs.)

21 rec / 197 yards / 2 TDs

PROS Tough, physical runner; natural hands catcher. Tracks the ball over his shoulder. High-character player.
CONS Can be lumbering. Lacks lateral quickness, agility to make tacklers miss in the open field.
NFL COMP Ben Patrick

260 RORY ANDERSON South Carolina (6' 5", 244 lbs.)

22 rec / 260 yards / 1 TD

PROS Tremendous speed; great vertical threat. Terrific body control and leaping ability.
CONS Injuries (hamstring, two triceps tears) are a major concern.
NFL COMP Ladarius Green

272 ERIC TOMLINSON UTEP (6' 6", 263 lbs.)

19 rec / 134 yards / 1 TD

PROS Absolutely massive. Willing blocker; will take on DEs at the point of attack. Good hands but not dominant at the catch point.
CONS Lacks speed to get open consistently against LBs.
NFL COMP Matthew Mulligan

283 JEAN SIFRIN UMass (6' 5", 245 lbs.)

42 rec / 642 yards / 6 TDs

PROS Smooth, fluid athlete. Changes direction well for his size. Can make contested catches with his frame, long arms.
CONS If he were 22—not 27—you might have something.
NFL COMP Tim Wright

286

GERALD CHRISTIAN LOUISVILLE (6' 3", 244 LBS.)

32 rec / 384 yards / 5 TDs

PROS Had the most bench-press reps, 28, of any TE at combine—a testament to his blocking.
CONS Must improve pass-catching skills.
NFL COMP Owen Daniels





SI 300 Rankings

More than 15,000
pounds' worth
of players eager to
hit the trenches

8

BRANDON SCHERFF, T IOWA (6' 5", 319 LBS.)

PROS Outland Trophy winner plays with wide, strong base. Excellent second-level blocker targets defenders well in space. Weight-room monster.

CONS Lateral movement is not a strength; struggles at times to move outside and maintain leverage.

NFL COMP *Jake Long*

12 LA'EL COLLINS, T LSU (6' 4", 305 lbs.)

PROS Knockdown machine with an aggressive attitude, he was often the biggest bully on the block—that, in the SEC.

CONS Aggression works against him at tackle; teams may see him as a guard.

NFL COMP *Orlando Franklin*

19 ANDRUS PEAT, T Stanford (6' 7", 313 lbs.)

PROS Fits physical mold of a franchise OT—tall, long arms, carries weight well. Habitually fires his way to the secondary.

CONS Needs to be more ornery through the whistle.

NFL COMP *Nate Solder*



24 CAMERON ERVING, C Florida State (6' 5", 313 lbs.)

PROS Versatility: Started as a D-tackle; voted first-team All-ACC at left tackle in 2013 and third-team at center in '14.

CONS Has played all of five games at center.

NFL COMP *Weston Richburg*

26 T.J. CLEMMINGS, T Pittsburgh (6' 5", 309 lbs.)

PROS Physically imposing, with room for muscular development. Buries defenders with leverage.

CONS Lets edge rushers leak to backside when he's tired.

NFL COMP *Tyron Smith*

30 JAKE FISHER, T Oregon (6' 6", 306 lbs.)

PROS Very agile for tackle position (background at TE). Thrived in the Ducks' speed-based system.

CONS Still developing: Weighed in low-200-pound range not long ago.

NFL COMP *Sebastian Vollmer*

37 ERECK FLOWERS, T Miami (6' 6", 329 lbs.)

PROS Plays with as much edge as any lineman in this class. Stays engaged up to, and at times even through, the whistle.

CONS Team that drafts him will have to live with penalties.

NFL COMP *Cordy Glenn*

45 LAKEN TOMLINSON, G Duke (6' 3", 323 lbs.)

PROS Dominant at times as run blocker in a phone booth—in his gap, moving forward. Intelligent; tremendous raw strength.

CONS Very inconsistent with hand placement—tends to stab instead of locking on.

NFL COMP *Trai Turner*

48 D.J. HUMPHRIES, T
Florida (6' 5", 307 lbs.)

PROS Nimble feet are perhaps the main reason NFL teams envision him as a long-term LT. Covers ground quickly.

CONS Lack of experience (19 starts); health questions.

NFL COMP *Duane Brown*

51 A.J. CANN, G
South Carolina (6' 3", 313 lbs.)

PROS Durable, hard-working, solid in technique. Does his best work in close quarters. Leverage is usually very good.

CONS Shorter than NFL standard. Can struggle against powerful interior DL.

NFL COMP *Larry Warford*

53 TRE' JACKSON, G
Florida State (6' 4", 330 lbs.)

PROS Potent punch in the run game; moves very well along interior to execute wham/trap blocks. Does a very good job of sealing along the interior.

CONS Bad habit of dropping eyes just before contact.

NFL COMP *Justin Blalock*

60 CEDRIC OGBUEHI, T
Texas A&M (6' 5", 306 lbs.)

PROS Quick, agile athlete for his size. Plays with good lateral speed, power and wide base to keep defenders at bay.

CONS More of an engager than a true drive blocker.

NFL COMP *Derek Sherrod*

67 TY SAMBRILLO, T
Colorado State (6' 6", 311 lbs.)

PROS Former skiing champion sets and seals the edge quickly and consistently when run-blocking. Nasty demeanor shows up when he pulls outside.

CONS Not an ideal build; needs to improve strength all around.

NFL COMP *Riley Reiff*

89 ALI MARPET, C
Hobart (6' 4", 307 lbs.)

PROS One of the quickest linemen in this crop, he stole the show at the combine: 4.98 40, a 4.47 shuttle and a 7.33 three-cone drill.

CONS Rarely challenged by small-school schedule.

NFL COMP *Chris Chester*

92 HRONISS GRASU, C
Oregon (6' 3", 297 lbs.)

PROS Smart, proven leader of an up-tempo, diverse offense. Is able to establish his positioning in a heartbeat.

CONS Short yardage was a struggle at Oregon.

NFL COMP *Ben Jones*

94 REESE DISMUKES, C
Auburn (6' 3", 296 lbs.)

PROS Gets into his set quickly from the snap and rights his body well for pass protection. Technique, attitude allow him to play stronger than his size in run game. Natural leader.

CONS Lack of bulk becomes problematic when he plays too high and loses power.

NFL COMP *Weston Richburg*

103 DONOVAN SMITH, T
Penn State (6' 6", 338 lbs.)

PROS Relies on quick feet in run blocking. Shows some power, with the potential for more.

CONS Aside from the Senior Bowl, has yet to fully impress with any degree of consistency.

NFL COMP *Andre Smith*

105 DARYL WILLIAMS, T
Oklahoma (6' 5", 327 lbs.)

PROS Puts massive frame to good use in run game. Can get a quick jump off snap and bowl over defenders.

CONS His attempts to land the first blow can leave him off-center and lunging.

NFL COMP *Ramon Foster*

106 B.J. FINNEY, C
Kansas State (6' 4", 318 lbs.)

PROS Mean and smart—coveted traits for a center. Experience playing multiple positions.

CONS Short arms (32"); won't make many plays in space.

NFL COMP *Bryan Stork*

112 ROB HAVENSTEIN, T
Wisconsin (6' 7", 321 lbs.)

PROS Size and mentality to be strong run blocker. Quick for a massive player.

CONS Somewhat stiff, plays tall as a pass blocker.

NFL COMP *Phil Loadholt*

113 JOSUE MATIAS, G
Florida State (6' 5", 309 lbs.)

PROS Excellent at getting to second level quickly, eliminating LBs in run game.

CONS Not great at the point of attack on power rushes.

NFL COMP *James Carpenter*

115 ANDY GALLIK, C
Boston College (6' 2", 306 lbs.)

PROS Tough-nosed battler can leverage against larger DTs. Mauler in power run game.

CONS Can get lost in space on sweeps, screens.

NFL COMP *Bryan Stork*

122 TYRUS THOMPSON, T
Oklahoma (6' 5", 324 lbs.)

PROS Good size; aggressive run-blocker. Long arms help in pass protection.

CONS Could struggle against quicker pass rushers.

NFL COMP *Austin Howard*

149 COREY ROBINSON, T
South Carolina (6' 7", 324 lbs.)

PROS Imposing specimen uses massive frame in intelligent ways in pass protection, especially vs. speed rushers.

CONS Weak initial punch. Often beaten by quick first step off the edge.

NFL COMP *Corey Hilliard*

152

JAMIL DOUGLAS, G
ARIZONA STATE (6' 4", 304 LBS.)

PROS Does a good job getting out in space, pulling or on screens. Able to find targets, engage while in motion.

CONS Best suited to a zone scheme. Can lose at the point of attack too often when asked to angle block in run game.

NFL COMP *Chad Rinehart*



153 JOHN MILLER, G
Louisville (6' 2", 303 lbs.)

PROS Played both LG and RG senior year. A mauler of a player. Most comfortable when asked to fire off the line with power.

CONS Game can look too fast for him. More creative D's give him problems.

NFL COMP *Rob Sims*

154 ARIE KOUANDJIO, G
Alabama (6' 5", 310 lbs.)

PROS Mammoth man (with frame to add weight) plays light on his feet, can be dominant on the ground. Long wingspan gives him advantage in pass-blocking.

CONS Gets lost in the action. Complicated medical history.

NFL COMP *James Carpenter*

157 SEAN HICKEY, T
Syracuse (6' 5", 309 lbs.)

PROS Very adept at mirroring his opponent; never flustered by D-line games. Picks up stunts, blitzes with ease.

CONS Lacks good initial punch, especially in ground game.

NFL COMP *Dan Connolly*

164 JARVIS HARRISON, G
Texas A&M (6' 4", 330 lbs.)

PROS Great build in lower body helps him anchor in the run game and absorb rushers in pass protection.

CONS Some question his commitment to football over basketball. Can be lazy.

NFL COMP *Justin Blalock*

169 SHAQ MASON, C
Georgia Tech (6' 1", 300 lbs.)

PROS Logged 52 games at Tech, playing all three interior positions. Exceptionally strong; premier drive blocker.

CONS Short arms for an NFL lineman. Rarely called on for pass protection in college.

NFL COMP *A.Q. Shipley*



170
MITCH MORSE, G
Missouri (6' 5", 305 lbs.)

PROS Plays with good instincts: Reacts well to blitzes; knows when to climb to second level, hitting blocks with good angles.

CONS His 32 $\frac{1}{4}$ " arms make him ill-suited to block on the edge. Needs to improve knee bend.

NFL COMP *Nate Chandler*

171 JEREMIAH POUTASI, T
Utah (6' 5", 335 lbs.)

PROS Powerful drive blocker in run game. Huge wingspan, massive lower body. Can get to the second level as quickly as any O-lineman.

CONS Really struggles with speed off edge. Inconsistent finishing his blocks.

NFL COMP *Rodger Saffold*

174 ANDREW DONNAL, T
Iowa (6' 6", 313 lbs.)

PROS Tall, but plays with enough base to anchor on the edge. Fighter: Does whatever he can to get guys blocked.

CONS You'd think he'd be a more physically imposing blocker at his size.

NFL COMP *Erik Pears*

183 AUSTIN SHEPHERD, T
Alabama (6' 4", 315 lbs.)

PROS Solid frame. Blue-collar blocker and brawler. Flashes ability to punch and recover. Rides speed defenders upfield.

CONS Doesn't have the long arms you covet in an OT; defenders can get under him.

NFL COMP *Don Barclay*

203 ADAM SHEAD, G
Oklahoma (6' 4", 338 lbs.)

PROS Massive road grader. Uses weight effectively run-blocking when he connects squarely with defenders.

CONS Stiff in pass protection. Inconsistent footwork. Looks awkward at times run-blocking.

NFL COMP *Johnnie Troutman*

207 MARK GLOWINSKI, G
West Virginia (6' 4", 307 lbs.)

PROS Has the height and length to control blockers inside, the feet to reach blocks.

CONS Must get stronger—and has the frame to do so.

NFL COMP *J.R. Sweezy*

211 ROBERT MYERS, T
Tennessee State (6' 5", 326 lbs.)

PROS Imposing specimen with extremely strong lower body and long arms that allow him to control defenders. Doesn't give ground against a bull rush.

CONS Better angle blocker than zone blocker. Struggled with speed off the edge.

NFL COMP *Davin Joseph*

218 BEN BECKWITH, G
Miss. State (6' 3", 306 lbs.)

PROS Pass-blocking technique is excellent; consistently good footwork. Showed versatility by sliding to center last fall.

CONS Athleticism is subpar, creating a host of vulnerabilities.

NFL COMP *Jamon Meredith*

220 MILES DIEFFENBACH, G
Penn State (6' 3", 303 lbs.)

PROS Shows good football IQ and strength at point of attack. Started 26 games; plenty of experience against Power Five teams.

CONS Strength and agility seemed to decrease after left-ACL injury in March '14.

NFL COMP *John Urschel*

230 GREG MANCZ, C
Toledo (6' 4", 301 lbs.)

PROS Excellent versatility: Played multiple positions along O-line. Shows ability to hit moving targets.

CONS Will struggle to move bigger DTs one-on-one.

NFL COMP *J.C. Tretter*

237 JON FELICIANO, G
Miami (6' 4", 323 lbs.)

PROS Great power with tremendous lower-body strength. A bulldozer when Miami pulled the guard.

CONS Lacks the athleticism to match his strength.

NFL COMP *Zane Beadles*



246

MAX GARCIA, C
Florida (6' 4", 309 lbs.)

PROS Strong enough base to stand up pass rushers at line of scrimmage and hold them in place. Good vision peeling off double teams.

CONS Played in shotgun; limited direct snaps.

NFL COMP *Manny Ramirez*

247

JAMON BROWN, T
Louisville (6' 4", 323 lbs.)

PROS It's not hyperbolic to say he's massive. Sheer space he takes up makes it hard for DEs to run around him.

CONS Prone to overextend in pass protection, leaving him off-balance.

NFL COMP *Adam Snyder*

264

BRETT BOYKO, T
UNLV (6' 7", 301 lbs.)

PROS Good length and has proved to be a quick learner.

Great instincts that allow him to counter rushers' first and second moves.

CONS Plenty to improve: knee bend, hand placement, leverage.

NFL COMP *Jonathan Scott*

266

LEON BROWN, G
Alabama (6' 6", 320 lbs.)

PROS Uses frame to block with power. Drives feet through contact to move his man.

CONS Moved from tackle to guard because he simply doesn't have quickness to play outside. Even as a guard his speed is subpar.

NFL COMP *Jahnnie Troutman*

273

TAYO FABULUJE, G
TCU (6' 6", 353 lbs.)

PROS Carries a hulking frame that's hard to push back or move around. Strong north-south lead

blocker on running plays.

CONS Lacks lateral quickness to stay with edge rushers moving across his face.

NFL COMP *Byron Bell*

279

TRENTON BROWN, G
Florida (6' 8", 355 lbs.)

PROS Absolutely huge. One-on-one, you can't move him. Flashes powerful punch. Punishing combo blocker.

CONS Not going to hit a moving target in space.

NFL COMP *Oniel Cousins*

298

AUNDREY WALKER, G
USC (6' 6", 315 lbs.)

PROS Fires off ball in run game. Has long arms to fight off defenders. Mirrors well; moves feet to stay in front.

CONS Needs to anchor better. Bull rushers will give him trouble.

NFL COMP *Jamon Meredith*

Top 40 time
at combine

**ALI
MARPET**
4.98

Top bench-
press reps at
combine

**ERECK
FLOWERS**
37





THE TRANSFORMER

A fast-twitch first step, blazing speed, a massive chip on his shoulder—those tools made Missouri's Shane Ray a top 10 talent. Now that he's made peace with his past, the fire to chase NFL QBs must come from within

BY JOAN NIESEN

Photograph by
Todd Rosenberg
For Sports Illustrated
Photo Illustration
By SI Premedia

→ **NO ONE** knows where Shane Ray is. He's late on this Saturday in February, because he's been speed-dating a handful of the NFL's worst teams as part of the meet-and-greet meat market that is the combine. Now it's approaching 11 p.m. in Indianapolis, an hour typically reserved for bars or for bed.

But Ray gets neither pleasure tonight. Not yet. Instead it's time for a makeshift workout, a series of sprints and speed-technique work crammed into a hallway of the downtown convention center, and when he finally appears, he's shuffling. His feet barely lift from the carpet. He's just downed a room-service cheesesteak in a matter of seconds. And now he has to sprint. Ray is exhausted, but he's here, and then—*one, two, three, go!*—he's gone. His trainer, Tony Villani, looks on, parsing every step.

His *first* step—scouts see him as the most explosive edge rusher in the draft—is the reason the 6' 3", 245-pound defensive end is a likely top 10 pick. And once he gets going? Ray's unofficial 4.56-second 40 time (recorded at Missouri's pro day after Ray missed some workouts at the combine with a toe injury) is No. 3 among edge rushers in this class.

Ray's game is all speed—speed and intimidation. The face under his helmet twists taut with aggression. In 2014, his junior season, he set a school record at Missouri with 14 sacks and was named the SEC's Defensive Player of the Year. Just months earlier he'd been a relative unknown—an anonymity that Ray relishes. Being slighted adds an extra punch to his game. And football has always been a fight. "Ask all these offensive linemen I dominated," he says. "They looked at me like I'm little."

And then his voice drops to a whisper, his dark eyes narrow, and he imagines staring across the line at an opposing tackle and hissing, *I'm about to tear your ass up.*

For this one sentence Ray is menacing—and then very quickly he is not. Off the field his speed fades almost instantly. His closest friends call him a teddy bear, an overgrown kid whose smiles come easy. He's gotten used to this, turning himself on and off, and now it's easy to flip the switch from angry to calm.

For years, though, it was impossible. There was no switch, only one setting. And anger only gets a person so far before it tears him down.

FOR THE first 15 years of Shane Ray's life, football was an afterthought. His clearest memory of his peewee career is of getting kicked out of games for being too aggressive. By the fifth grade he'd quit. His father wasn't in the picture and his mother, Sebrina Johnson, had divorced from his stepfather, who'd also been Ray's youth coach.

Uprooted by the split—Ray and his mother moved from a nicer part of Kansas City, Mo., back to the rough neighborhood, nicknamed the Murder Factory, where he'd been born—the chubby 10-year-old withdrew. When an older cousin with whom he'd been close was murdered the next year, he simmered; when an aunt and a great-uncle died shortly afterward, he seethed. Eventually he shut down. By eighth grade he had stopped talking to his mom and was idolizing the kind of crowd that had gotten his cousin killed. Outside of drawing, his hobbies were nonexistent.

Johnson knew she had to act. She turned to her church, Concord Fortress of Hope, where a fellow parishioner, J.J. Smith, suggested football as an outlet. Smith, a former NFL running back with the Chiefs, introduced mother and son to Tom Shortell, a suburban dentist who in his spare time ran an inner-city team, the 39th Street Giants.

"I was so out of shape," recalls Ray, who joined Shortell's team in eighth grade. "I hadn't been playing for three years. I was still short." His feet were too big, and he was so slow, recalls one teammate, that one day during a routine prank—throw a water balloon at a skateboarder and retreat—Ray found himself drenched in a retaliatory Slurpee during his plodding escape.

Even so, the self-described "odd kid" flourished with the Giants, coming out of his shell and making friends. As high school loomed, Johnson turned to Shortell once more. She wanted her son out of public school. At the coach's suggestion Ray applied to Bishop Miege, a Catholic school in the suburbs. Once enrolled, he joined the football team.

It wasn't an instant match. Ray bristled at Miege's strict atmosphere. He hated his uniform and his studies. But, more than anything, the kid who didn't even watch football on television was infuriated that his Giants teammates had moved to the varsity, while he was left on the freshman team. That first year Ray was nearly expelled for racking up so many detentions. When he told his coach, Tim Grunhard, that he wanted to transfer, Grunhard put it plainly: "You can leave—but the same problems you're facing now, they'll follow you wherever you go."

Ray pressed his hand up against the prison glass, meeting his father's palm. Shane's was bigger. IT WAS ABOUT DAMN TIME THAT HE GREW UP.



Johnson was apoplectic. She was sacrificing so much for so little return—an IT professional, she paid her son's \$10,000 tuition with extra catering and party planning jobs—and after years of tough love, she had just one more move. At the time Ray's father was locked up in downtown K.C. for failing to pay child support. It was time for a visit.

Wendell Ray and his 15-year-old son had almost no relationship, but that day in 2008, as they spoke through the glass about life and consequences, something clicked: If he didn't shape up, Shane could end up like his father. "It [was] like a movie," he recalls. "I realized I had to change."

One moment from that visit sticks with Johnson: her son pressing a hand up against the glass, across from his father's palm. Shane's was bigger. It was about damn time that he grew up.

FOR ALL the hatred that he felt toward his father, Shane Ray always clung to this point of pride: His dad had played football at Missouri and was drafted by the Vikings. Wendell had been a stud defensive end. (Injuries ended his pro career before he played a down.) His son was developing into a pretty good one himself.

Ray hit a growth spurt at the end of his sophomore year. He lost his baby fat and finally fit those feet. By his junior season,

6



Players drafted from Missouri's pass-rush factory in the past six years. In the NFL that group has contributed 318 tackles and 72 sacks over 13 combined seasons.

after he knocked the opposing quarterback unconscious in Miede's state championship victory, offer letters started to pour in. Now, rather than fighting against the rules, Shane was directing his anger toward his father. When Wendell Ray's alma mater extended a scholarship offer, Shane jumped at the opportunity to one-up his old man.

He was joining a program known for churning out pass rushers. In 2001, Missouri's Justin Smith had been the NFL's No. 4 pick. In '09, Ziggy Hood went 32nd, and the spring before Ray arrived in Columbia, San Francisco drafted Aldon Smith seventh. While Ray was with the Tigers, Sheldon Richardson, Kony Ealy and Michael Sam would all be drafted too. Ray was positioning himself perfectly to end up where he is now. But back then he was blind to everything but besting his dad.

It was evident in his dorm-room décor: Ray covered his walls with newspaper clippings detailing his father's college achievements. To others, he came across as angry, a hothead. He hated that teammates knocked him for having attended private school, so he partied to toughen up his reputation.

On the field Ray cared little for the concept of team. "Every time we talked about football," says his roommate Ian Simon, "the first thing he'd say was, Did you see what I did?" In his redshirt year he missed a mandatory workout. The next day he was made to drag a set

of chains around the practice facility for three hours while Paul Wall rap lyrics—*I'm a break 'em off real bad/I'm a break 'em*—blared over the speakers on repeat. Coaches hoped he'd learn from the punishment. "But he didn't learn too much," recalls teammate David Johnson. "It just kind of pissed him off."

Once Ray got into the Tigers' rotation, success followed—and he made sure teammates knew it. During a 2012 spring practice he forced an interception and celebrated loudly as he jogged off the field. Later Ray capped the night by attending a house party on campus.

The following morning coaches summoned him. First, defensive line coach Craig Kuligowski showed him photos on Facebook: Ray, underaged, at the alcohol-soaked party. Next, defensive coordinator Dave Steckel played a video of the previous day's practice antics. Steckel's words stick with Ray today. "You selfish s.o.b.," he recalls the coach saying. "I don't care how good you are, you'll never play for the University of Missouri like that. I'll send you back to Kansas City."

It was there, in a facility where the walls were dotted with the NFL jerseys of former Tigers pass rushers, that Ray finally realized how close he'd come to losing his opportunity. He resolved to change.

He took down the clippings and worked to repair his relationship with his father, forgiving him for years of absence, and underwent what Simon calls a "complete 180." He let go. "He became somebody different, because now he wasn't just playing for vengeance and anger," David Johnson says. "He was playing for his team and his brothers."

In 2013, Ray performed well enough as a backup to Ealy and Sam that Kuligowski tailored a third-down package for him. That season Ray logged nine tackles for loss and 4½ sacks and burst onto the national scene in a 41–31 Cotton Bowl win over No. 13 Oklahoma State when he scooped up a fumble for a 73-yard touchdown return. In his final, junior season, his 22½ tackles for loss led the Tigers, but his most transformative moment came off the field when, for the first time, he saw footage of his father playing at Missouri. The team's video coordinators had been putting together a highlight reel, and when they came across a clip of Ray's father they gave the defensive end a glimpse.

As the video played, Ray saw that he was better than his father had ever been. But he also realized that he owed his father appreciation for the raw skills he'd inherited.

By late last fall Ray had met every goal he'd set when he arrived at Missouri. He'd let go of the grudge that for so long fueled him, and he'd abandoned the anger that accompanied it. Still, he was restless. He couldn't sleep. He'd spend hours each night racking his brain, wondering how he could get better, what would push him now. He'd call his mother or read on his phone. And as he tossed and turned, Ray finally realized: He didn't need anyone else to motivate him.

Which is how the fat kid ended up here, in this hallway in Indianapolis, running sprints while talking heads debate his worth—second pick? eighth? 13th?—on a television just out of earshot. With every *one, two, three, go*, Villani fights back a smile. There's nothing to critique, nothing to improve, but Ray keeps running. Tonight he'll sleep well. □

RAY OF LIGHT

Johnson (below, right) got her son to visit his incarcerated father—and then, at Missouri, to play like him.





SI 300 Rankings

NFL offenses are scoring more than ever. These guys want to tilt the trend

WITH 2014 STATS

LINEMEN

1 **LEONARD WILLIAMS, DT**
USC (6' 5", 302 lbs.)
48 tackles / 7 sacks / 3 FF
PROS Plays at an almost unfair speed given his size. If he gets his hands into a blocker early, it's all but over.
CONS Suspect technique.
NFL COMP *Gerald McCoy*

13 **DANNY SHELTON, DT**
Washington (6' 2", 339 lbs.)
53 tackles / 9 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Speed and agility in



short spaces—he'll break off a block at line and tear after a RB, meet him at sideline.
CONS Weight has been a point of concern.
NFL COMP *Vince Wilfork*

18 **SHANE RAY, DE**
Missouri (6' 3", 245 lbs.)
47 tackles / 14½ sacks / 3 FF
PROS Freakish athlete. Moves pocket quickly with dynamic first step, excellent burst.
CONS Gets too high in stance and loses leverage.
NFL COMP *Bruce Irvin*

25 **MALCOM BROWN, DT**
Texas (6' 2", 319 lbs.)
39 tackles / 6½ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Shoots gaps well for player of his size. Good laterally; keeps feet moving.
CONS Needs to work on Plans B and C in penetrating line.
NFL COMP *Terrance Knighton*

31 **MICHAEL BENNETT, DT**
Ohio State (6' 2", 293 lbs.)
24 tackles / 7 sacks / 3 FF
PROS Explodes off line with energy to cause problems. Tracks ball, improvises well.
CONS Undersized; unable to hold line if double-teamed.
NFL COMP *Henry Melton*

32 **ARIK ARMSTEAD, DE**
Oregon (6' 7", 292 lbs.)
25 tackles / 2½ sacks / 1 FF
PROS Body type-athleticism combo has teams drooling. Upside is astronomical.
CONS Raw traits? Yes. Instant impact? Maybe not.
NFL COMP *Calais Campbell*

35 **EDDIE GOLDMAN, DT**
Florida State (6' 4", 336 lbs.)
19 tackles / 4 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Swim move could be devastating if developed. Bull rush is highly effective.
CONS Tends to spar/wrestle, not move in/dominate.
NFL COMP *Shaun Rodgers*

44 **OWAMAGBE ODIGHIZUWA, DE**
UCLA (6' 3", 267 lbs.)
41 tackles / 6 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Should help against run immediately. Built as if he's been in an NFL lifting program for years.
CONS Injury woes will drop him.
NFL COMP *Everson Griffen*

46 **CARL DAVIS, DT**
Iowa (6' 5", 320 lbs.)
14 tackles / 2 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Can be as disruptive as any DT. Extremely long arms

(34⁵/₈"), big hands (11").
CONS Just 3¹/₂ career sacks.
 Why didn't he dominate?
NFL COMP *Linval Joseph*

50 PRESTON SMITH, DE
Miss. State (6' 5", 271 lbs.)

22 tackles / 9 sacks / 2 FF
PROS Excellent wrap-up tackler; experience rushing passer from both inside and outside.
CONS Questionable first step.
NFL COMP *Antonio Smith*

52 JORDAN PHILLIPS, DT
Oklahoma (6' 5", 329 lbs.)

20 tackles / 2 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Simply a large human being. Staggers interior OL when he drives forward.
CONS Pass rush hasn't caught up to run-stuffing abilities.
NFL COMP *Haloti Ngata*

56 NATE ORCHARD, DE
Utah (6' 3", 250 lbs.)

54 tackles / 18¹/₂ sacks / 3 FF
PROS Impressively quick off edge. Could be special if technique improves.
CONS Tends to react instead of bowling through to pocket.
NFL COMP *Aaron Maybin*

61 GRADY JARRETT, DT
Clemson (6' 1", 304 lbs.)

26 tackles / 1¹/₂ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Great first-step quickness; uncanny ability to time his burst to the snap.
CONS Struggles to beat opponents with power.
NFL COMP *Kelly Gregg*

63 HENRY ANDERSON, DE
Stanford (6' 6", 294 lbs.)

40 tackles / 8¹/₂ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Can line up all over. Good speed off snap; moves through traffic quickly.
CONS Too much of a tweener: not great at any one thing.
NFL COMP *Tyson Jackson*

68 DANIELLE HUNTER, DE
LSU (6' 5", 252 lbs.)

30 tackles / 1¹/₂ sacks / 1 FF
PROS Rare athleticism for his height; impressive speed in every direction.
CONS Limited in his technique.
NFL COMP *Bruce Irvin*

74 MARIO EDWARDS JR., DE
Florida State (6' 3", 279 lbs.)

25 tackles / 3 sacks / 2 FF
PROS Good feel for gaps; speed to run through openings and disrupt.
CONS No explosion at the snap.
NFL COMP *Robert Ayers*

78 MARKUS GOLDEN, DE
Missouri (6' 2", 260 lbs.)

35 tackles / 10 sacks / 3 FF
PROS One of draft's most consistent high-effort guys. Popular in locker room.
CONS Size could be an issue.
NFL COMP *Jeremy Mincey*

83 TREY FLOWERS, DE
Arkansas (6' 2", 266 lbs.)

34 tackles / 6 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Great field speed for his size. Moves into short/intermediate coverage well.
CONS Reactive, not proactive.
NFL COMP *Björn Werner*

84 XAVIER COOPER, DT
Wash. State (6' 3", 293 lbs.)

17 tackles / 5 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Wreaks havoc with his jump off the line. Uses quickness to find gaps.
CONS Lacks great size.
NFL COMP *Antonio Smith*

85 GABE WRIGHT, DT
Auburn (6' 3", 300 lbs.)

10 tackles / 1 sack / 0 FF
PROS Quick off the ball. Relentless effort as a pass rusher. Nice motor downfield.
CONS Plays too high.
NFL COMP *Jordan Hill*

96 TYLER DAVISON, DT
Fresno State (6' 2", 316 lbs.)

35 tackles / 8¹/₂ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Big boy chews up multiple blockers on run downs. Underrated set of moves.
CONS Content holding the line.
NFL COMP *Johnathan Hankins*

126 TRAVIS RACITI, DT
San Jose State (6' 5", 285 lbs.)

39 tackles / 3 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Employs great height to locate ball. Controls blockers with long arms.
CONS Not a great first step.
NFL COMP *Beau Allen*

130 MARCUS HARDISON, DT
Arizona State (6' 3", 307 lbs.)

31 tackles / 10 sacks / 3 FF
PROS One of quickest DTs in draft: 4.91 40 at his pro day. Knows how to get to QB.
CONS Lower-body strength could be an issue in NFL.
NFL COMP *Earl Mitchell*

137 CHRISTIAN COVINGTON, DT
Rice (6' 2", 289 lbs.)

14 tackles / 2¹/₂ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Jolts O-linemen off the snap and backs his initial surge with power.
CONS May struggle to get any bigger than he is now.
NFL COMP *Earl Mitchell*

148 ELLIS MCCARTHY, DT
UCLA (6' 5", 338 lbs.)

12 tackles / 3 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Lightning-quick ability to shoot gaps, wreck blocking schemes.
CONS Prone to disappear.
NFL COMP *Grady Jackson*

159

ZA'DARIUS SMITH, DE
KENTUCKY
 (6' 4", 274 lbs.)

26 tackles / 4¹/₂ sacks / 0 FF

PROS Powerful hands, arms enable him to shed blocks and get into the backfield. Never gives up pursuit.

CONS Starts to play high as he gets tired; practically stands up late in games.
NFL COMP *Mike Montgomery*



172 CEDRIC REED, DE
Texas (6' 5", 269 lbs.)
40 tackles / 5½ sacks / 1 FF
PROS Speed to pursue QB; good burst off snap; nose for the ball. Long frame.
CONS Poor at shedding blocks.
NFL COMP *Tony Jerod-Eddie*

173 LETERRIUS WALTON, DT
Central Michigan (6' 5", 319 lbs.)
19 tackles / 2 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Imposing, physical interior presence. Effective redirecting foes one-on-one.
CONS Trouble disengaging.
NFL COMP *Red Bryant*

184 COREY CRAWFORD, DE
Clemson (6' 5", 283 lbs.)
18 tackles / 2 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Has NFL size, length. Anticipates run well; good ability to change direction.
CONS Questionable toughness.
NFL COMP *Bruce Gaston*

188 DERRICK LOTT, DT
Chattanooga (6' 4", 314 lbs.)
23 tackles / 6 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Light on his feet for a 300-plus DT. Long arms; solid sense of his position.
CONS Weak college schedule.
NFL COMP *Fletcher Cox*

190 ANTHONY CHICKILLO, DE
Miami (6' 3", 267 lbs.)
20 tackles / 3 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Lined up all over Miami's front. Good leverage and can anchor despite his size.
CONS Few hand-fighting moves.
NFL COMP *Kroy Biermann*

202 LOUIS TRINCA-PASAT, DT
Iowa (6' 1", 290 lbs.)
29 tackles / 6½ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Tenacious, competitive. Not big, but makes up for it with hard work. Willing to let teammates stand out.
CONS Short arms. Will struggle to get off blocks.
NFL COMP *Mike Daniels*



219

JOEY MBU, DT
HOUSTON
(6' 3", 313 lbs.)

17 tackles / 2½ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Very good hands and awareness against the pass. Knows who he is (run stopper) and isn't (pass rusher).
CONS Can be reckless getting upfield, leaving large holes for RBs.
NFL COMP *Lawrence Guy*

221 KALEB EULLS, DT
Mississippi State (6' 3", 305 lbs.)
10 tackles / 3 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Good burst off snap. Chases hard down the line. Uses angles to get free.
CONS Heavy-footed. Struggles to push pocket.
NFL COMP *Corey Peters*

225 RAKEEM NUNEZ-ROCHES, DT
Southern Miss. (6' 2", 307 lbs.)
32 tackles / 3 sacks / 0 FF
PROS High-motor guy; plays through the whistle.
CONS Suspect awareness. Struggles with double teams.
NFL COMP *Clinton McDonald*

228 XAVIER WILLIAMS, DT
Northern Iowa (6' 2", 325 lbs.)
38 tackles / 8 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Flashes violent punch. Can push the pocket up the middle. Times the snap well.
CONS Hands must improve. Struggled against elite teams.
NFL COMP *Colin Cole*

232 SHAQUILLE RIDDICK, DE
West Virginia (6' 6", 242 lbs.)
24 tackles / 7 sacks / 0 FF
PROS Gets upfield quickly; shows consistent fight. Great pro-day numbers.
CONS Tweener who doesn't fully fit DE or DT role.
NFL COMP *Manny Lawson*

243 ZACK WAGENMANN, DE
Montana (6' 3", 247 lbs.)
34 tackles / 17½ sacks / 6 FF
PROS Gets in backfield relatively consistently. Excellent backside pursuit.
CONS Strength is a concern.
NFL COMP *Kroy Biermann*

267 FRANK CLARK, DE
Michigan (6' 3", 271 lbs.)
29 tackles / 4½ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Explosive rusher—especially with bull rush.
CONS Needs more moves.
NFL COMP *Derek Wolfe*

280 J.T. SURRETT, DT
South Carolina (6' 1", 304 lbs.)
20 tackles / 1 sack / 0 FF
PROS NFL size will help him anchor against the run.
CONS Doesn't offer much as a pass-rusher.
NFL COMP *Dwan Edwards*

284 BOBBY RICHARDSON, DT
Indiana (6' 3", 283 lbs.)
24 tackles / 5½ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Quick feet. Inside pass-rush move slays slow foes.
CONS If initial move fails, he's easily taken out of the play.
NFL COMP *Kendall Reyes*

287 MARTIN IFEDI, DE
Memphis (6' 3", 275 lbs.)
26 tackles / 2½ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Has size to be a 4-3 DE, length to make it as a 3-4 DE.
CONS Needs more burst to be an effective NFL edge rusher.
NFL COMP *Jarius Wynn*

LINEBACKERS

3 RANDY GREGORY, DE/OLB
Nebraska (6' 5", 235 lbs.)
23 tackles / 7 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Athletic freak with 34" reach, 4.64 40 time. Flies after the football.
CONS Tested positive for marijuana at combine.
NFL COMP *Clay Matthews Jr.*

5 DANTE FOWLER JR., DE/OLB
Florida (6' 3", 261 lbs.)
29 tackles / 8½ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Plays low to the ground; makes life hard for taller OTs. Wears down his foes.
CONS Relies on speed, motor.
NFL COMP *Justin Houston*

10 VIC BEASLEY, OLB
Clemson (6' 3", 246 lbs.)
28 tackles / 12 sacks / 2 FF
PROS Appears as if he knows QB's count. Shoots out of a

cannon at the snap.
CONS Not reliable against run.
Lacks bag of tricks.
NFL COMP *Von Miller*

14

SHAQ THOMPSON, OLB
Washington (6' 0", 228 lbs.)
52 tackles / 1 sack / 3 FF
PROS Dual RB/OLB at

UW has natural elusiveness to get around protection.
CONS Not big enough to deal with second-level blockers.
NFL COMP *DeAndre Levy*

28 BENARDRICK MCKINNEY, ILB
Mississippi State (6' 4", 246 lbs.)

35 tackles / 3 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Imposing; tough to deal with coming downhill. Throws power into collisions.
CONS So-so footwork.
NFL COMP *Brandon Spikes*

29 ERIC KENDRICKS, ILB
UCLA (6' 0", 232 lbs.)

101 tackles / 4 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Phenomenal instincts, especially against run. Rarely caught out of position.
CONS Arguably plays too fast.
NFL COMP *Sean Lee*

34 DENZEL PERRYMAN, ILB
Miami (5' 11", 236 lbs.)

79 tackles / 2 sacks / 3 FF
PROS Highlight-reel tackler. Stays square; storms downhill with intensity.
CONS Will play a two-down role on most NFL teams.
NFL COMP *Brandon Spikes*

36 BUD DUPREE, DE/OLB
Kentucky (6' 4", 269 lbs.)

45 tackles / 7½ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Can mirror TEs and slot men; could be used very creatively.
CONS Lacks raw strength.
NFL COMP *Akeem Ayers*

39 PAUL DAWSON, ILB
TCU (6' 0", 235 lbs.)

81 tackles / 6 sacks / 2 FF



PROS Tracks ball adeptly from sideline to sideline; lateral speed to close on WRs.
CONS Not equipped to deal with large, powerful blockers.
NFL COMP *Pat Angerer*

58 ELI HAROLD, DE/OLB
Virginia (6' 3", 247 lbs.)

29 tackles / 7 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Gets off snap, into OL's body in a hurry. Bull rush moves men 50 lbs. heavier.
CONS Few hand moves to speak of—no rip or swim.
NFL COMP *Chad Greenway*

82 STEPHONE ANTHONY, ILB
Clemson (6' 3", 243 lbs.)

45 tackles / 2½ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Quick to diagnose runs between tackles. Explodes into gaps but stays in control.
CONS Loses the leverage game far too often.
NFL COMP *Rolando McClain*

86 HAU'OLI KIKAHA, OLB
Washington (6' 2", 253 lbs.)

53 tackles / 19 sacks / 3 FF
PROS Jaw-dropping production past two years: at least one sack in each of UW's 14 games in '14.
CONS Tackling and run stopping are lacking.
NFL COMP *Damontre Moore*

2014 FBS
interceptions
leader

GEROD
HOLLIMAN
14

98 LORENZO MAULDIN, OLB
Louisville (6' 4", 259 lbs.)

36 tackles / 6½ sacks / 1 FF
PROS Nice speed-strength combo; comes off snap quickly. Patient tackler.
CONS Gets washed out by blockers too often.
NFL COMP *Jackson Jeffcoat*

100 ZACK HODGES, OLB
Harvard (6' 2", 250 lbs.)

12 tackles / 8½ sacks / 1 FF
PROS Comes off ball low, quickly. Uses hands well.
CONS Limited array of pass-rushing techniques.
NFL COMP *Scott Crichton*

111 RAMIK WILSON, ILB
Georgia (6' 2", 237 lbs.)

56 tackles / 2 sacks / 1 FF
PROS Quick to the ball on runs. Explodes through RBs.
CONS Takes too many false steps. Fooled by misdirection.
NFL COMP *Justin Durant*

116 KWON ALEXANDER, OLB
LSU (6' 1", 227 lbs.)

40 tackles / 1½ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Has range, athleticism to pursue ballcarriers sideline to sideline.
CONS Field awareness is low.
NFL COMP *Mike Peterson*

117 GENE GRISSOM, DE/OLB
Oklahoma (6' 3", 262 lbs.)

27 tackles / 3½ sacks / 2 FF
PROS Raw, versatile athlete. (Took TE snaps at pro day.) Willing to chase down RBs.
CONS Pass-rush moves lack creativity.
NFL COMP *Shea McClellin*

124 JORDAN HICKS, OLB
Texas (6' 1", 236 lbs.)

75 tackles / 3½ sacks / 0 FF
PROS Impressive physique. Effective open-field tackler.
CONS Not enough explosive plays. Questionable durability.
NFL COMP *Vontaze Burfict*

135 **LYNDEN TRAIL, DE/OLB**
Norfolk State (6' 6", 260 lbs.)

32 tackles / 5 sacks / 2 FF

PROS Rare versatility for size. Advanced hand technique.

CONS Lacks high-level NCAA reps at any one position.

NFL COMP *Carlos Dunlap*

138 **BEN HEENEY, ILB**
Kansas (6' 0", 231 lbs.)

88 tackles / 1½ sacks / 2 FF

PROS Relentless; good lateral quickness. Athleticism to cover RBs in pass game.

CONS Lacks ideal size.

NFL COMP *Jerrell Freeman*

151 **TAIWAN JONES, ILB**
Michigan State (6' 3", 245 lbs.)

31 tackles / 4 sacks / 0 FF

PROS Comes downhill with ferocity. Good instincts.

CONS Slow to drop in coverage. Stiff in his hips.

NFL COMP *Christian Jones*

155 **JAKE RYAN, OLB**
Michigan (6' 2", 240 lbs.)

67 tackles / 2 sacks / 2 FF

PROS Has size, length to take on blockers at line; speed to make tackles in space.

CONS Overwhelmed at times after moving to ILB in '14.

NFL COMP *Sean Weatherspoon*

160 **KYLE EMANUEL, DE/OLB**
N. Dakota State (6' 3", 255 lbs.)

50 tackles / 19½ sacks / 3 FF

PROS Good leverage; rushes with low center of gravity.

CONS Average burst; 31" arms may be an issue against long NFL blockers.

NFL COMP *Shea McClellin*

163 **MIKE HULL, ILB**
Penn State (6' 0", 237 lbs.)

75 tackles / 2 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Sure tackler. Sees the gaps and will fill hard.

CONS Struggles to sift through traffic inside.

NFL COMP *Spencer Paysinger*



182 **DAVIS TULL, OLB**
CHATTANOOGA (6' 2", 246 LBS.)

37 tackles / 10½ sacks / 2 FF

PROS Killed it at combine: best front-seven vertical, No. 2 broad jump, No. 8 bench press. In-game, he's unrelenting.

CONS A bit of a project at LB. Recently underwent labrum surgery.

NFL COMP *Robert Mathis*

185 **HAYES PULLARD, ILB**
USC (6' 0", 240 lbs.)

53 tackles / 0 sacks / 0 FF

PROS Changes direction well. Closes with burst. Quick in short spaces. Great tackler.

CONS Lowers head to make tackles, causing him to whiff.

NFL COMP *Andra Davis*

191 **MARTRELL SPAIGHT, OLB**
Arkansas (6' 0", 236 lbs.)

63 tackles / 1 sack / 2 FF

PROS Good timing on interior blitzes. Closes with burst to RBs. Willing to take on FBs.

CONS Doesn't have elite top-end speed (4.88 40).

NFL COMP *Omar Gaither*

199 **MAX VALLES, OLB**
Virginia (6' 5", 251 lbs.)

24 tackles / 9 sacks / 3 FF

PROS Can play with hand down or as stand-up LB. Wins battles with strength and speed.

CONS Relies on athleticism.

NFL COMP *Connor Barwin*

206 **BRYCE HAGER, ILB**
Baylor (6' 1", 234 lbs.)

76 tackles / 2 sacks / 2 FF

PROS Productive tackler; gets after the ball. Has speed and athleticism to cover.

CONS Undersized; got held up by bigger defenders.

NFL COMP *Barrett Ruud*



SHOES

SAY A LOT ABOUT

YOU

SAY SOMETHING

GREAT

DESIGNER SHOE WAREHOUSE®

BULLBOXER CHUKKA MID-TOP \$89.95 (COMPARE AT \$120)

Top 40 time at combine

TRAE WAYNES

4.31

212 TREY DEPRIEST, ILB
Alabama (6' 0", 254 lbs.)

41 tackles / 0 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Scrapes through traffic against the run. Has played in a ton of big games, had impactful moments.

CONS A reach tackler who labors in space.

NFL COMP *Perry Riley*

213 DEION BARNES, DE/OLB
Penn State (6' 4", 260 lbs.)

20 tackles / 6 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Able to play as a standing rusher or with hand on the ground. Stood out against Big Ten foes.

CONS Struggled in '13 when he became a focal point of opposing attacks.

NFL COMP *Tourek Williams*

222 ALANI FUA, OLB
BYU (6' 5", 238 lbs.)

29 tackles / 4 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Lined up all over in college. Could add weight/strength to his tall frame.

CONS Where is his best fit?

NFL COMP *Manny Lawson*

223 XZAVIER DICKSON, OLB
Alabama (6' 3", 260 lbs.)

32 tackles / 9 sacks / 0 FF

PROS Takes good angles; has enough speed to track down plays on backside.

CONS Lacks strength.

NFL COMP *Sam Acho*

241 J.R. TAVAI, OLB
USC (6' 2", 249 lbs.)

33 tackles / 7 sacks / 3 FF

PROS Uncanny knack for being involved in plays that swing games. Rarely wastes steps rushing QB.

CONS Doesn't have great speed in pursuit.

NFL COMP *Carl Bradford*

242 EDMOND ROBINSON, OLB
Newberry (6' 3", 245 lbs.)

42 tackles / 2½ sacks / 1 FF

PROS Length is a big part of intrigue; uses long arms effectively to wrap up RBs. Plenty of room to add muscle.

CONS ...Until then, doesn't have NFL strength.

NFL COMP *Spencer Paysinger*

249 AMARLO HERRERA, ILB
Georgia (6' 1", 244 lbs.)

44 tackles / 3 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Has juice as an interior pass rusher; never stops chasing plays, despite lacking ideal top-end speed.

CONS Short with short arms. Not an imposing tackler.

NFL COMP *T.J. Slaughter*

257 A.J. TARPLEY, ILB
Stanford (6' 2", 241 lbs.)

41 tackles / 2 sacks / 0 FF

PROS Excels because of intellect, technique. Form tackler knows how to move between gaps to follow play.

CONS Athleticism is average. Not aggressive to the ball.

NFL COMP *Paul Posluszny*

258 AARON DAVIS, OLB
Colorado State (6' 0", 225 lbs.)

60 tackles / 0 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Presnap reads and tremendous instincts allow him to fly to the ball. Keen understanding of the game.

CONS Instincts mask physical flaws: well under ideal size and speed to play LB.

NFL COMP *Ja'Gared Davis*

261

JERMAURIA
RASCO,

DE/OLB

LSU

(6' 3",

247 LBS.)

**24 tackles /
4 sacks / 1 FF**

PROS Benefited greatly from playing under DC John Chavis at LSU. Smart player; doesn't get easily fooled. Finds the ball well.

CONS Short arms could be a liability at DE. Lacks explosiveness to shoot by blockers.

NFL COMP *Connor Barwin*

274 JAMES VAUGHTERS, OLB
Stanford (6' 2", 258 lbs.)

31 tackles / 6½ sacks / 2 FF

PROS Delivers powerful, massive hits. Known as a very coachable player with a great attitude.

CONS Has a tendency to trip up and lose sight of a play.

NFL COMP *Adrian Hubbard*

288 DAMIEN WILSON, ILB
Minnesota (6' 0", 245 lbs.)

63 tackles / 4 sacks / 1 FF

PROS Takes good angles in pursuit; doesn't give up on plays run away from him. Shoots gaps well on blitzes.

CONS Gets pushed around as an edge rusher.

NFL COMP *Danny Trevathan*

294 TONY WASHINGTON, OLB
Oregon (6' 4", 247 lbs.)

37 tackles / 6 sacks / 3 FF

PROS Knows how to finish tackles, force turnovers.

CONS Needs to improve his play speed and strength.

NFL COMP *Jordan Zumwalt*



STACY REVERE/GETTY IMAGES



CRUNCHY JALAPEÑOS
TANGO ACROSS YOUR TONGUE

All trademarks are owned by Frito-Lay North America, Inc. © 2014



SECONDARY

11 TRAE WAYNES, CB
Michigan State (6' 0", 186 lbs.)
34 tackles / 3 INTs / 8 PD
PROS Thrived in MSU scheme that placed him on an island.
CONS Pushes legal limit with his hand usage in coverage.
NFL COMP *Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie*

15 LANDON COLLINS, SS
Alabama (6' 0", 228 lbs.)
60 tackles / 3 INTs / 7 PD
PROS Has the mentality of a 220-pound linebacker.
CONS Eager to get downhill, exposing him in play-action.
NFL COMP *Dante Whitner*

17 MARCUS PETERS, CB
Washington (6' 0", 197 lbs.)
25 tackles / 3 INTs / 7 PD
PROS Not hesitant to use his size in physical coverage.
CONS Character concerns.
NFL COMP *Joe Haden*

20 P.J. WILLIAMS, CB
Florida State (6' 0", 194 lbs.)
52 tackles / 1 INT / 10 PD
PROS Uses size to make himself an obstacle at line.
CONS Jumps routes, vanishes in coverage on occasion.
NFL COMP *Xavier Rhodes*

21 KEVIN JOHNSON, CB
Wake Forest (6' 0", 188 lbs.)
32 tackles / 1 INT / 6 PD
PROS Stood out on a dismal team. Smooth backpedaler.
CONS Size leaves something to be desired; not enough bulk.
NFL COMP *Brent Grimes*

40 JALEN COLLINS, CB
LSU (6' 1", 203 lbs.)
28 tackles / 1 INT / 9 PD
PROS Ideal frame and aggressiveness for NFL.
CONS Can get lost when he backpedals to rhythm of play.
NFL COMP *Prince Amukamara*

65 GEROD HOLLIMAN, FS
Louisville (6' 0", 218 lbs.)
34 tackles / 14 INTs / 3 PD
PROS Full-field speed; can transition in a flash from the deep third to the box.
CONS Doesn't tackle often—or do it very well.
NFL COMP *Rahim Moore*

69 ERIC ROWE, CB
Utah (6' 1", 205 lbs.)
42 tackles / 1 INT / 13 PD
PROS Employs long arms well to disrupt WRs off the line.
CONS Needs to learn to use the sideline to help him defend.
NFL COMP *Byron Maxwell*

70 DERRON SMITH, FS
Fresno State (5' 10", 200 lbs.)
66 tackles / 1 INT / 7 PD
PROS Looks like a WR tracking, making move on ball.
CONS Takes himself out of position eyeing big plays.
NFL COMP *Louis Delmas*

72 D'JOUN SMITH, CB
Florida Atlantic (5' 10", 187 lbs.)
32 tackles / 1 INT / 8 PD
PROS Keeps game in front of him. High-points ball well.
CONS Gets stiff and abrupt in his backpedal at times.
NFL COMP *Josh Wilson*

73 ALEX CARTER, CB
Stanford (6' 0", 196 lbs.)
33 tackles / 1 INT / 9 PD
PROS Nice combo of patient feet and quick hip turn.

CONS No top gear to deal with speed WRs on deep routes.
NFL COMP *Byron Maxwell*

75 QUINTEN ROLLINS, CB
Miami, Ohio (5' 11", 195 lbs.)
53 tackles / 7 INTs / 9 PD
PROS Thrives on footwork, rotating to track WRs.
CONS More long-term project than instant-impact pick.
NFL COMP *Jeremy Lane*

81 BYRON JONES, CB
UConn (6' 1", 199 lbs.)
16 tackles / 2 INTs / 4 PD
PROS One of the most athletic players in the draft.
CONS Coming off late-season shoulder injury.
NFL COMP *Justin King*

87 DAMARIOUS RANDALL, FS
Arizona State (5' 11", 196 lbs.)
85 tackles / 3 INTs / 9 PD
PROS Explosive tackler; good speed. Covers ground quickly.
CONS Can be caught taking the bait on play-action.
NFL COMP *C.J. Spillman*

88 JACOBY GLENN, CB
Central Florida (6' 0", 179 lbs.)
34 tackles / 7 INTs / 11 PD
PROS Aggressive tackler who plays bigger than his size.
CONS Not a burner downfield.
NFL COMP *Logan Ryan*

90 CODY PREWITT, FS
Ole Miss (6' 2", 208 lbs.)
44 tackles / 3 INTs / 2 PD
PROS Deciphers where a RB is headed, closes in a hurry.
CONS Man-to-man, footwork can be exploited by fast WRs.
NFL COMP *Major Wright*

91 SENQUEZ GOLSON, CB
Ole Miss (5' 9", 176 lbs.)
33 tackles / 10 INTs / 8 PD
PROS Good in run support; plays off-coverage very well.
CONS You don't see a lot of 5' 9" outside NFL corners.
NFL COMP *Brent Grimes*

64

RONALD DARBY, CB
FLORIDA STATE (5' 11", 195 LBS.)
28 tackles / 0 INTs / 4 PD

PROS Has the game of a legit lockdown CB. College QBs stayed outside of Darby's area.
CONS Has active hands but does not catch well. Physical NFL receivers could overwhelm him.
NFL COMP *Desmond Trufant*



Started my Camry.
Rescued a dog.
Searched for the owners.
Uncovered a plot.
Escaped with the evidence.
Took a leap of faith.
Left them all behind.
Kept the dog.

THE **BOLD** 2015 **CAMRY**

ONE BOLD CHOICE LEADS TO ANOTHER.



The 2015 Camry. Our boldest Camry ever.
toyota.com/camry

Prototype shown with options. Production model will vary. ©2015 Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc.



Let's
Go
Places

93 **LORENZO DOSS, CB**
Tulane (5' 10", 182 lbs.)

36 tackles / 3 INTs / 9 PD

PROS Played WR as high schooler; tracks ball like one.

CONS Tends to lock on a man; suspect to RB misdirection.

NFL COMP *Josh Robinson*

95 **JAQUISKI TARTT, SS**
Samford (6' 1", 221 lbs.)

53 tackles / 1 INT / 1 PD

PROS Big, tough specimen; plays up to his physique.

CONS Not as fast as you'd like. Strictly a strong safety.

NFL COMP *Mark Barran*

97 **ANTHONY HARRIS, SS**
Virginia (6' 1", 183 lbs.)

49 tackles / 2 INTs / 10 PD

PROS Outstanding read, recognition skills.

Patience moving through blocks at line.

CONS More of a tackle collaborator than instigator.

NFL COMP *Brock Vereen*

102 **IFO EXPRE-OLOMU, CB**
Oregon (5' 9", 195 lbs.)

43 tackles / 2 INTs / 9 PD

PROS Arguably the top CB in this draft class before a December ACL tear.

CONS Lacks size; speed is good, not great.

NFL COMP *Chris Harris*

104 **CHRIS HACKETT, FS**
TCU (6' 0", 195 lbs.)

51 tackles / 7 INTs / 6 PD

PROS Lives on his instincts, with his outstanding forced-turnover numbers as proof.

CONS Gambles without having recovery speed.

NFL COMP *James Ihedigbo*

109 **STEVEN NELSON, CB**
Oregon State (5' 10", 197 lbs.)

37 tackles / 2 INTs / 8 PD

PROS Closes ground in a flash. Anticipates routes well.

CONS Too many penalties.

NFL COMP *Alterraun Verner*

118 **CHARLES GAINES, CB**
Louisville (5' 10", 180 lbs.)

31 tackles / 2 INTs / 10 PD

PROS Experience as WR shows in pattern recognition; adept at adjusting to routes.

CONS Thin-limbed; struggles at times with tackling.

NFL COMP *Robert Alford*

120 **JOSH SHAW, CB**
USC (6' 0", 201 lbs.)

9 tackles / 0 INTs / 0 PD

PROS Great size for an NFL DB; physical with receivers.

CONS Red flag: suspended after fabricating a wild story.

NFL COMP *Antoine Cason*

121 **QUANDRE DIGGS, CB**
Oregon (5' 9", 196 lbs.)

52 tackles / 3 INTs / 5 PD

PROS Tough and competitive; battles on every play.

CONS Considered too slow for a player his size.

NFL COMP *Alfonzo Dennard*

128 **DURELL ESKRIDGE, FS**
Syracuse (6' 3", 208 lbs.)

47 tackles / 1 INT / 3 PD

PROS Coveted frame for a DB. Changes directions fluidly; accelerates in a hurry.

CONS Instincts: not NFL-caliber.

NFL COMP *Kam Chancellor*

136 **DORAN GRANT, CB**
Ohio State (5' 10", 200 lbs.)

49 tackles / 5 INTs / 9 PD

PROS Physical, willing tackler. Good ball skills. Team leader.

CONS Movement isn't especially natural.

NFL COMP *Chimdi Chekwa*

141 **JAMES SAMPLE, SS**
Louisville (6' 2", 209 lbs.)

74 tackles / 4 INTs / 8 PD

PROS Good at reacting to plays, getting involved. Great range moving across field.

CONS Lack of experience: one season as a starter.

NFL COMP *Bernard Pollard*

142

KURTIS DRUMMOND, FS

MICH. STATE (6' 1", 208 LBS.)

54 tackles / 4 INTs / 11 PD

PROS Smart and instinctive.

Good strength, athleticism, range. Could help teams that use split safeties.

CONS Pressed too much last year, got burned.

NFL COMP *Louis Delmas*



146 **KEVIN WHITE, CB**
TCU (5' 9", 183 lbs.)

44 tackles / 2 INTs / 11 PD

PROS Instinctive cover CB can blanket WRs with size. (Did so to *other* Kevin White in Nov.)

CONS Issues keeping pace with quick, elusive WRs.

NFL COMP *Jason Verrett*

150 **ADRIAN AMOS, FS**
Penn State (6' 0", 218 lbs.)

30 tackles / 3 INTs / 7 PD

PROS Versatile: Played CB and safety. Physical; not afraid to challenge WRs in close space.

CONS The more you ask of him, the more likely he'll freeze up.

NFL COMP *Devin McCourty*

156 **JACOREY SHEPHERD, CB**
Kansas (5' 11", 199 lbs.)

23 tackles / 3 INTs / 16 PD

PROS Outstanding ball skills. Anticipates routes, breaks toward the ball quickly.

CONS Footwork needs honing.

NFL COMP *Carlos Rogers*

161 **IBRAHEIM CAMPBELL, SS**
Northwestern (5' 11", 208 lbs.)

39 tackles / 3 INTs / 3 PD

PROS Very good instincts near the line and in centerfield. Explodes through runners.

CONS Can be a bit stiff in coverage. Overfocuses on QB.

NFL COMP *Danieal Manning*

162 **LADARIUS GUNTER, CB**
Miami (6' 1", 202 lbs.)

21 tackles / 2 INTs / 6 PD

PROS Takes calculated risks, breaking on balls before they're thrown.

CONS His 4.69 40 time shows.

NFL COMP *Tharold Simon*

168 **JORDAN RICHARDS, SS**
Stanford (5' 11", 211 lbs.)

53 tackles / 3 INTs / 5 PD

PROS Extremely tough; seems to relish contact.

CONS Subpar speed and size.

NFL COMP *Kurt Coleman*

+
A NEW SERIES FROM
THE EDITORS OF
FORTUNE
AND
Sports Illustrated

+ PRO-FILES

FROM THE FIELD TO THE BOARDROOM. ATHLETES THAT MADE IT BIG IN BUSINESS.

CAL RIPKEN JR.



JOHN ELWAY



ROGER STAUBACH



JOHN STALLWORTH



JACK NICKLAUS



For the full series of Pro-Files videos & articles go to:
si.com/pro-files or **fortune.com/pro-files**

176 DONALD CELISCAR, CB
Western Mich. (5' 11", 194 lbs.)
52 tackles / 4 INTs / 17 PD
PROS Active hands. Sheds blockers well. Quick instincts.
CONS Goes low on his tackles too often; leads with his head.
NFL COMP *Bené Benwikere*

178 CLAYTON GEATHERS, SS
Central Florida (6' 2", 218 lbs.)
58 tackles / 1 INT / 9 PD
PROS NFL pedigree: Uncles Robert and Jumpy Geathers both played in the league.
CONS Prone to make mistakes.
NFL COMP *Matt Elam*

181 NICK MARSHALL, CB
Auburn (6' 1", 207 lbs.)
0 tackles / 0 INTs / 0 PD
PROS Converted QB unafraid to try anything asked of him.
CONS Little experience getting hands on WRs at line.
NFL COMP *E.J. Biggers*

186 ANTHONY JEFFERSON, CB
UCLA (6' 1", 198 lbs.)
50 tackles / 1 INT / 8 PD
PROS Good size for a DB; follows through on tackles.
CONS His 4.72 combine 40 was very slow for a D-back.
NFL COMP *Jamarca Sanford*

195 CRAIG MAGER, CB
Texas State (5' 11", 201 lbs.)
46 tackles / 3 INTs / 10 PD
PROS One of draft's most tested players: 48 games.
CONS Dubious size, speed.
NFL COMP *Dwayne Gratz*

201 IMOAN CLAIBORNE, CB
Northwestern State (5' 11", 187 lbs.)
35 tackles / 4 INTs / 7 PD
PROS Talented at disrupting routes, locating ball.
CONS Not tested often in '14.
NFL COMP *Brent Grimes*

205 KYSHOEN JARRETT, SS
Virginia Tech (5' 10", 200 lbs.)
52 tackles / 3 INTs / 5 PD

PROS Physical; hard hitter. Quick, good foot movement.
CONS Ho-hum in man coverage.
NFL COMP *Devin McCourty*

214 JERMAINE WHITEHEAD, FS
Auburn (5' 11", 197 lbs.)
27 tackles / 6 INTs / 1 PD
PROS Playmaking coverage safety with a knack for finding the ball in the air.
CONS Attitude, coachability, size, physicality are concerns.
NFL COMP *Ron Parker*

215 ERICK DARGAN, SS
Oregon (5' 11", 210 lbs.)
61 tackles / 7 INTs / 6 PD
PROS Expertly diagnoses and blows up misdirections.
CONS Speed doesn't match mental aspects of his game.
NFL COMP *Patrick Chung*

223 DAMIAN SWANN, CB
Georgia (6' 0", 189 lbs.)
35 tackles / 4 INTs / 8 PD
PROS Long and lanky. Plays high. Reads QB well in zone.
CONS Flies around—not always in a way that makes sense.
NFL COMP *Aaron Ross*

224 JUSTIN COX, FS
Miss. State (6' 2", 180 lbs.)
15 tackles / 1 INT / 4 PD
PROS Elite combine scores in the 40, vert and broad jumps.
CONS Arrested in fall; pleaded down to trespassing.
NFL COMP *Reggie Nelson*

233 DESHAZOR EVERETT, CB
Texas A&M (6' 0", 193 lbs.)
51 tackles / 1 INT / 7 PD
PROS Aggressive, physical; played with injuries at A&M.
CONS Aggression far too often makes him a vulnerability.
NFL COMP *Buster Skrine*

234 BRYCE CALLAHAN, CB
Rice (5' 10", 185 lbs.)
39 tackles / 2 INTs / 7 PD



238

TEVIN
MCDONALD,
FS

EASTERN WASH.
(5' 11", 195 lbs.)

53 tackles / 3 INTs / 7 PD
PROS Plays with instincts; quick to read and react. Solid speed that allows him to cover plenty of territory.
CONS Size makes him a liability, especially near the line.
NFL COMP *Louis Delmas*

PROS Transitions out of press coverage smoothly.
CONS Taller WRs outjump him; physical WRs outfight him.
NFL COMP *Jerraud Powers*

248 BOBBY MCCAIN, CB
Memphis (5' 9", 195 lbs.)

38 tackles / 5 INTs / 4 PD
PROS Reads QB's eyes and breaks on ball well. Comes up in run support.
CONS Size is costly, especially on the outside in red zone.
NFL COMP *Tramaine Brock*

250 CAM THOMAS, CB
Western Ky. (6' 1", 190 lbs.)

37 tackles / 2 INTs / 5 PD
PROS Press man corner with NFL size. Fights to keep WRs from crossing his face.
CONS Stiff hips; balance issues.
NFL COMP *David Amerson*

252 JUSTIN COLEMAN, CB
Tennessee (5' 11", 185 lbs.)

31 tackles / 4 INTs / 5 PD
PROS One of the best all-around performances by any player at the combine.
CONS Dives too often tackling.
NFL COMP *Jaylen Watkins*

259 JULIAN WILSON, CB
Oklahoma (6' 2", 205 lbs.)

32 tackles / 1 INT / 7 PD
PROS Perfectly fits NFL trend of big, fast corners.
CONS Struggled to stay with his man in pass coverage.
NFL COMP *Marcus Cooper*

265 CODY RIGGS, CB
Notre Dame (5' 9", 185 lbs.)

25 tackles / 1 INT / 3 PD
PROS Smart; great technique. Recognizes routes well.
CONS Vulnerable to jump balls.
NFL COMP *Darius Butler*

270 BERNARD BLAKE, CB
Colorado State (6' 0", 185 lbs.)

26 tackles / 1 INT / 11 PD
PROS Skilled in man and zone

coverage. Reads plays quickly and has good timing.

CONS On the lighter end of this draft's CB class.

NFL COMP *Buster Skrine*

275 **GARRY PETERS, CB**
Clemson (6' 0", 191 lbs.)

35 tackles / 1 INT / 12 PD

PROS Physical bump-and-run guy. Good eye in zone looks.

CONS Lacks top-end speed.

NFL COMP *Cornelius Brown*

289 **RONALD MARTIN, SS**
LSU (6' 2", 220 lbs.)

25 tackles / 2 INTs / 9 PD

PROS Stout stand-up tackler. Comfortable as deep rover.

CONS Not physical in the box.

NFL COMP *Duron Harmon*

292 **TYE SMITH, CB**
Towson (6' 0", 195 lbs.)

57 tackles / 1 INT / 8 PD

PROS Quick to recover, close down gaps on short and intermediate routes.

CONS Mediocre tackler in run D.

NFL COMP *Jerraud Powers*

295 **DEAN MARLOWE, FS**
James Madison (6' 1", 203 lbs.)

59 tackles / 4 INTs / 5 PD

PROS Eye for the big hit.

Capable one-on-one in slot.

CONS Ejected thrice for targeting in '14.

NFL COMP *Mike Mitchell*

296 **CURTIS RILEY, CB**
Fresno State (6' 0", 190 lbs.)

42 tackles / 0 INTs / 8 PD

PROS Lays out for tackles without hesitation.

CONS Doesn't always wrap well.

NFL COMP *Blidi Wreh-Wilson*

299 **DETRICK BONNER, FS**
Virginia Tech (6' 0", 207 lbs.)

41 tackles / 1 INT / 4 PD

PROS Lauded by coaches as on-field communicator.

CONS Reads QB's eyes poorly.

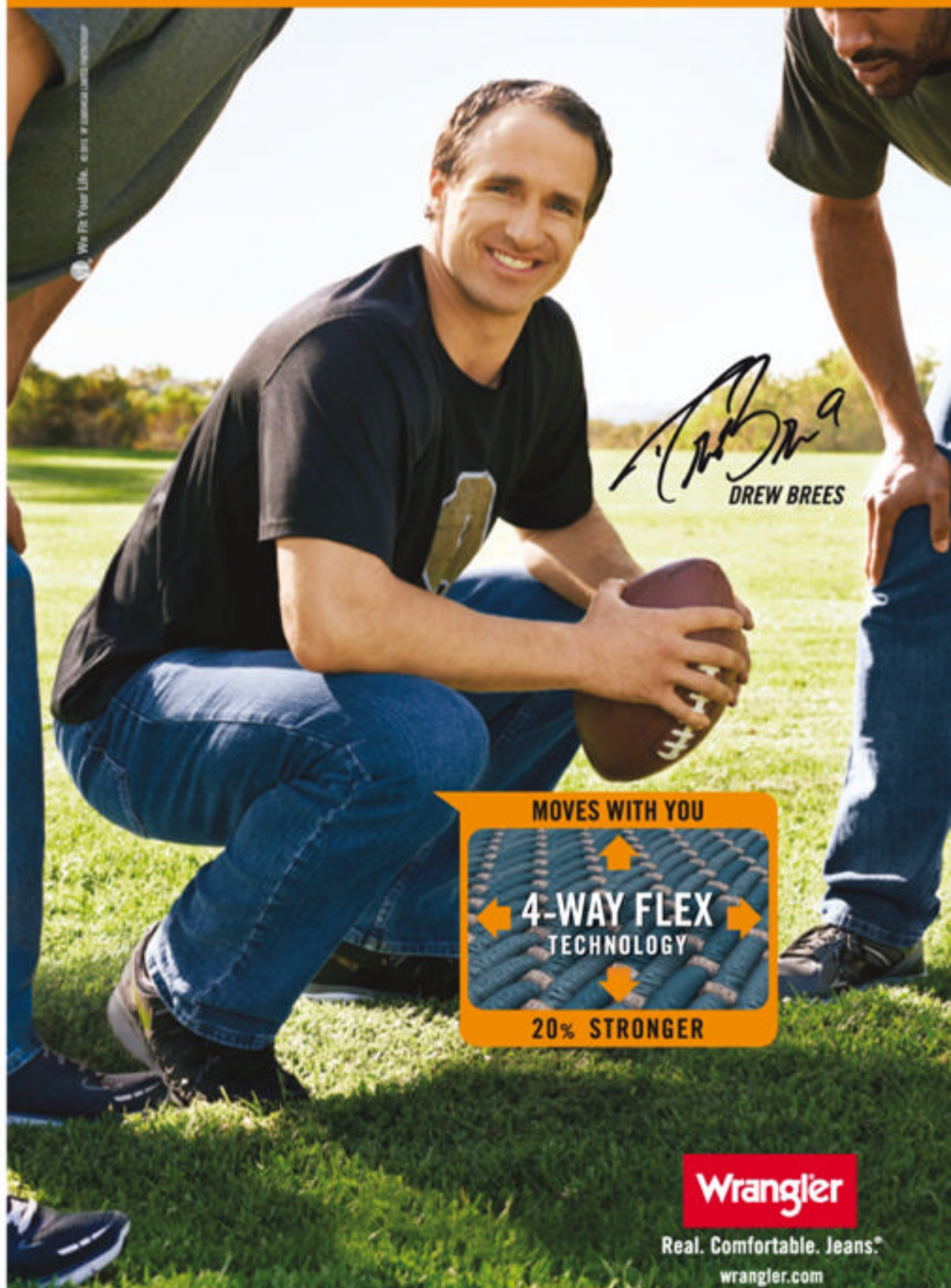
NFL COMP *Glover Quin*

NEW

Wrangler

ADVANCED COMFORT™

**THE MOST COMFORTABLE JEANS
YOU'LL EVER WEAR. GUARANTEED.**



MOVES WITH YOU



20% STRONGER

Wrangler

Real. Comfortable. Jeans.®

wrangler.com





THE TRAINEE

Most job interviews don't take three months—but the NFL isn't most employers. Prospects like Ohio State defensive tackle Michael Bennett undergo exhaustive preparation to make the most of every second

BY ANDY STAPLES

Photograph by
Todd Rosenberg
For Sports Illustrated
Photo Illustration
by SI Premedia

→ **MICHAEL BENNETT** wore the black-and-gold shirt and the hat he'd been handed on the field minutes earlier as confetti fell. The Ohio State senior defensive tackle had just gutted out a 42–20 win over Oregon while playing with a groin injury that would have sidelined him for a regular-season game, and capped his college career with a national title. Shortly after midnight on Jan. 13, a few reporters huddled around Bennett's stall in the back of the Buckeyes' locker room at Jerry Jones's football palace in Arlington, Texas, and asked the usual questions.

How does your body feel after playing a semifinal against Alabama and a title game against Oregon?

"It feels like a national champion," Bennett said with a laugh, omitting any information about the searing pain between his abdomen and thigh.

How will this change your life?

"Hopefully, it makes it easier to get a job."

Less than 48 hours later Bennett was back in Columbus, signing the paperwork that would mark the start of his quest for employment. He was about to begin one of America's most unique job hunts. "It's nothing like anything else you're going to see in your life," Bennett would say later. "You're not going to have to go through a three-month interview for any other job, as far as I know."

THE FORMS Bennett signed on Jan. 14 came from Five Star Athlete Management. His decision to hire the firm headed by agent Todd France had come a week earlier, though

Bennett began getting calls from agents last summer. Because he didn't want his agent decision to be a distraction during his senior season, he outsourced the weeding-out process to two of the most thorough, skeptical people he knew: Connie and Mike Bennett, two engineers who met as students at West Point and raised their three children in the Dayton suburb of Centerville, Ohio.

Connie, who does IT and software development work for the federal government, quickly realized that she and Mike, a program manager for the Air Force, needed to educate themselves before helping their son. "My husband and I have been in business for a long time. We've had to hire people and fire people and evaluate performance," Connie says. "What does a 22-year-old know about that? I don't think they have a class that says, Here's the job of an agent. Here's how you know you have a good one."

The Bennetts sought advice from the families of their son's former teammates who are currently in the NFL. They quizzed the parents of Packers center Corey Linsley, Broncos cornerback Bradley Roby, Texans linebacker John Simon and others to discern what makes an effective representative. Over a few months they built a list of criteria to add to their No. 1 requirement: "Somebody who wasn't on the front page of anything for anything bad," Connie says. The Bennetts combined their knowledge of their son's personality with research and information gleaned from interviews. How much contact did the agents maintain with their clients? What differentiated them? Since the son of two West Point-educated engineers naturally leans toward the analytical, the elder Bennetts favored agents who rely more on hard data than schmoozing to help them negotiate bigger contracts. That was bad news for the candidate who said he was a "big brother" to his clients. "Dude," Connie remembers thinking, "you're older than me."

Projected as a second- or third-round pick, Michael met with a handful of agents the week after the Buckeyes crushed Wisconsin in the Big Ten title game and were selected to the first College Football Playoff. He chose Five Star shortly afterward, but because of NCAA rules he couldn't sign an agreement until after his final college game. By then he had already identified the biggest impediment to his NFL job hunt.

Before one of Ohio State's first practices between the Big Ten title game and the Sugar Bowl against Alabama, Bennett raced fellow D-lineman Adolphus Washington. This was their custom, and it added some spice to warmups. As he strained to outrun Washington, pain ripped through Bennett's groin. Having suffered through a groin injury two years earlier, Bennett knew this could be a problem for a while.

The injury limited Bennett less in the Sugar Bowl than in the national title game. He made four tackles (including a sack) against Alabama, but he made only one against Oregon's warp-

speed spread. Though Bennett's job as a three technique tackle in a 4-3 defense doesn't always lend itself to robust statistics—the duties include occupying blockers and creating congestion that funnels ballcarriers into space occupied by linebackers—the practice time he had missed had clearly caught up to him.

After taking a week to celebrate the national championship title and rest his strained groin, Bennett headed to Phoenix to begin training. He had originally planned to go to Mobile, where a good week of practices for the Senior Bowl might have generated some discussion about a first-round slot, but now he wouldn't get that chance. His rehab and training at an Exos training facility focused on the combine in Indianapolis in late February. There he would run the 40-yard dash and participate in agility drills in an environment where NFL teams control all the variables. That makes for easier comparisons and helps teams either confirm or question what they saw on college game film.

"It is ridiculous, but it's a perceptual game," says one of the Exos execs. "WE'RE JUST PLAYING THE GAME THE NFL PUT IN FRONT OF US."



Seconds Bennett shaved off his 40-yard dash time at Ohio State's pro day—a blink of the eye that could be big come draft day.

Watching Bennett, team officials saw an active three technique with long arms (33½ inches) who used his hands to stymie offensive linemen, diagnosed plays accurately, shot gaps to disrupt blocking schemes and usually held steady at the point of attack to allow his linebackers to make tackles. On occasion they'd see some flair like the rip-outside-spin-inside combo that beat Alabama offensive lineman Leon Brown and allowed Bennett to sack Blake Sims in the Sugar Bowl. Officials also saw a tackle who didn't always explode off the snap and who could occasionally be uprooted by double-teaming blockers.

How much could Bennett raise his stock based on his participation in the NFL's Spandex Games? Could a blazing 40-yard dash and a quick three-cone drill persuade teams to select him earlier? Bennett's agents paid thousands of dollars to Exos to give him the best chance.

"It is ridiculous, but it's a perceptual game," says Nick Winkelman, the director of education for Exos in Phoenix. "We're just playing the game the NFL put in front of us." The coaches in Phoenix could easily spend more time improving a potential draftee's pass-rushing moves than a straight 40-yard run, which he will never need in a



game. In fact, as Bennett and fellow draft hopefuls such as Leonard Williams (USC), Gabe Wright (Auburn) and Brock Hekking (Nevada) lifted in February, another group of players that included 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick and newly signed Bills offensive guard Richie Incognito performed more football-specific activities. But Exos was contracted in this case to improve the draft stock of Bennett & Co., and the outfit that trained 64 draftees in 2014—it also has facilities in California, Florida, Texas, Minnesota and North Carolina—intended to deliver.

Everything Bennett did in Phoenix from January to March was geared toward the combine and his pro day on March 13 at Ohio State. He met regularly with dietician Michelle Riccardi, who would use a wand connected by a USB cable to her computer to measure Bennett's body fat via ultrasound. ("I had an athlete call it a lie detector test," Riccardi says.) Bennett, who weighed in at 292 pounds on Feb. 10, wanted to get close to 300 without adding any bad weight. Exos doesn't give players much opportunity to cheat on their diets. The nutrition staff designs 20 meals a week—charged to the agent or player—plus a snack-and-supplement regime to help the player meet his weight

goal. Once a week the draft hopeful gets to order for himself; on Wednesday nights Bennett would visit Chipotle for a chicken burrito and a chicken and cheese quesadilla.

Exos also trains players for their interviews with team officials. Besides simulated scenarios that require players to answer the same questions they'll face at the combine or at predraft meetings at team facilities, they learn basics that apply to any job interview. Don't shake your leg. Don't look around. Maintain eye contact. Offer a firm—but not bone-crushing—handshake. Connie and Mike had drilled these lessons into their son's head early, so Michael breezed through this portion.

The pain came when Bennett worked with Tony Mikla, the facility's manager of physical therapy, to rehab the injured groin. "I don't know if you've ever had a groin massage," Bennett said in February, pausing a moment to allow all potential double entendres to enter his audience's mind. "But there is nothing nice about it." As Bennett spoke, Mikla strained to mash injured connective tissue in Bennett's inner thigh to keep it from tightening. Bennett grimaced each time Mikla pressed down on a new spot and each time he released the pressure. Still, every ache would be worth it if it allowed the groin to heal in time for the combine.

THE GROIN did not heal in time for the combine. While the other defensive linemen jumped and ran and bench-pressed at Lucas Oil Stadium, Bennett watched. He was weighed and measured, and even that was a disappointment. He chugged water to add extra heft, but it passed straight through him. He could not fool the scale: He had gained only one pound since that Feb. 10 weigh-in.

Bennett did interview with multiple teams, but even that was

BUCK UP

Bennett battled through Wisconsin's double teams in Ohio State's 59-0 win for the Big Ten title.

underwhelming. He was ready for all the screwball questions he'd heard about from former teammates. Colts tackle Jack Mewhort, for instance, had been given a minute to list as many possible uses for a brick as he could. Bennett had his list, but no one asked. "I didn't get any random questions," he told his agents in the lobby of the Omni Severin after a day of interviews.

Bennett was asked one thing he found odd. "You're a guy who has a lot of options," he recalls a Lions representative saying. "So how do we know you're really focused on football?" The question seemed to be code for: You grew up comfortably. You have a degree in family financial planning. How do we know you won't ditch football for some other line of work two years into your rookie contract? This question came almost a month before 24-year-old 49ers linebacker Chris Borland—a rookie in 2014—retired, citing fear of long-term brain injury. Clearly, teams were worried about this possibility before Borland left the sport. Bennett was initially shocked by the question. "It's almost like a backward compliment," Bennett says. "You have options, but we don't want you to have options." NFL contracts usually include a large up-front investment, so it made sense that teams might want to gauge Bennett's dedication. "Having a lot of options means I'm smart and I can do different things," Bennett says. "But I have to reassure teams I'm not a flight risk."

Bennett hoped his responses were satisfactory, because he knew he couldn't answer teams' questions about his speed or agility until his pro day. As darkness fell on Feb. 21, Bennett and his agents began walking toward the Circle Centre Mall in search of dinner. What did Bennett want? "Pizza," said the man who weighed in seven pounds lighter than he'd hoped.

BENNETT HAD a definite plan for pro day. He would dazzle with his vertical jump. He would answer any lingering questions with his time in the 40, which he hoped would be around 4.8 seconds. He would perform position drills that would show off his explosiveness. Then he would celebrate by enduring considerable pain. The upper portion of Bennett's left arm is covered by a tattoo of a huge, snarling bear made more menacing by Bennett's considerable muscle mass. Why a bear? Because it looks badass. The right arm? Lakers guard Nick (Swaggy P) Young says his right arm is "strictly for buckets"; Bennett's is strictly for the Buckeyes. Bennett has had all manner of Ohio State imagery inked to that limb, and he wanted to add a national championship trophy to his forearm.

Seventy-six men came to Ohio State to evaluate the Buckeyes who intended to make football their livelihood. The group featured repre-



sentatives from all 32 NFL teams, including some key decision makers. Steelers coach Mike Tomlin was there. So were Bengals coach Marvin Lewis and Vikings general manager Rick Spielman, the older brother of former Ohio State linebacker Chris Spielman.

In the weight room Bennett sneaked a peek at the clipboards of some of the team reps. Next to his name, a few had predicted a 4.95-second 40-yard dash. He had to beat that.

The day started perfectly for Bennett. He weighed in at 297 pounds and then reached 33½ inches on the vertical jump, which would have placed him third among defensive tackles at the combine. Those days of carefully calculated calories in Arizona had paid off. He declined to bench-press because of a slightly strained pectoral muscle, but he could always do that later. There is no difference between 225 pounds loaded on an Olympic bar at the combine or in a college weight room or in a training facility. Bennett knew those scouts wanted to see him run the 40 to give them a basis for comparison with the other defensive tackles in the draft. They wouldn't get the completely controlled conditions and laser timing they had in Indianapolis, but they would see the digits dance on their own stopwatches.

Bennett had only been running full speed for two days, but he didn't want to wait.

MARK J. REBILAS FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (3)

EYE FOR DETAIL

Facilities like Exos micromanage player workouts, supplements (below) and meals.



AN ICON JUST GOT LARGER



THE NEW NAVITIMER 46 mm

BREITLING BOUTIQUE

5 EAST 57TH STREET • NEW YORK

AVENTURA MALL • MIAMI

THE FORUM SHOPS AT CAESARS • LAS VEGAS

THE MALL AT MILLENIA • ORLANDO

"The whole idea was you have to show teams something," Bennett said. "You can't just keep putting it off." Beneath a scarlet banner emblazoned with the words THE "GRIND", Bennett limbered up on the turf field of OSU's indoor practice facility. The moment of truth came when Buckeyes strength coach Mickey Marotti put a bullhorn to his lips and broke the silence.

Mi-chael Ben-nett.

Mi-chael Ben-nett.

Bennett took his place at the starting line. He crouched in a sprinter's stance. Then he blasted forward. In the bleachers Connie and Mike saw their son flying. This 40 would make the wait worthwhile.

Bennett crossed the finish line knowing he had *looked* fast. "It looked like I was floating," he says. But floating is less effective than driving—planting deep in the turf to create the explosive propulsion that starts in the thigh, travels down the leg and fires through the ball of the foot. Bennett heard someone mutter, "Five flat." Five flat wouldn't prove anything. He had to run again.

He tried to stay loose as former teammates turned in their 40s. But Bennett knew something was wrong. He had gone so long without running full blast that his body hadn't been prepared for the shock of a wide-open sprint. Marotti raised the bullhorn again.

Mi-chael Ben-nett.

"I knew as I was going back to the line for the second 40 that I was going to pull something," Bennett recalls. "My calf didn't feel right, and my quad didn't feel right. But I wanted to run it because I knew I could go faster." This time he chose to drive instead of fly.

A few steps from the finish, Bennett felt the pop.

He ignored it. "You can always drive one or two more steps," Bennett says. After he crossed the line, Bennett grabbed his left hamstring. His grunts were drowned out by the gasp from the crowd. The Ohio State parents knew what was at stake for Bennett. So did his teammates.

But as Bennett cursed his luck and limped back to where his sweats lay in a pile, he paused and asked a scout what his stopwatch read. The number was 4.85.

Some scouts have itchy stopwatch fingers. Some have slower ones. The numbers for that second 40 reported to NFL teams may vary by a few hundredths of a second, but Bennett had definitely run faster. He had improved his time by about the duration of a blink, but that could be one valuable blink. Afterward, Bennett sat in the tattoo artist's chair. Had he not improved his time, the hamstring might have dominated his thoughts. Instead, only one thought echoed: "I hope this tattoo looks good."

BENNETT HAS spent the time since pro day letting his hamstring heal. He met with the Panthers on March 20, but his only work came on a grease board as he diagnosed plays. Last week, he also met with Jaguars officials. Bennett remains frustrated about this most recent injury for two reasons. "One, it doesn't look good to come off an injury and immediately



33 1/2

Inches Bennett reached on his vertical jump at his pro day, which would have put him third at the NFL combine.

A few steps from the finish Bennett felt his hamstring pop. HE IGNORED IT. "You can always drive one or two more steps," he says.

get injured—even though that's kind of expected," he says. "But two, I felt great. I was moving faster than I had ever moved, and I was 15 or 20 pounds heavier than when I moved that fast before. I just feel like I could have put up ridiculous numbers in all the drills."

Bennett's case offers an excellent test for the draft's version of the nature versus nurture debate. How much does college film matter versus the events in the Underwear Olympics? The answer probably won't become apparent until the second round begins on May 1. Bennett doesn't believe he'll fall further than that. "I put up two years of good film," he says. "They know what they're getting."

If the hamstring feels better, Bennett may try to perform position drills for teams the week before the draft. If the hamstring remains tender, he will have to stand on the numbers he already logged. Ultimately, the most important parts of Bennett's three-month job interview—that 33½-inch vertical and those two 40-yard dashes—may have been packed into about 11 seconds.

"It's all about what you do," Bennett says, "in that little bit of time." □

Saving People Money Since 1936

... that's when the first pro football draft happened.

GEICO has been serving up great car insurance and fantastic customer service for more than 75 years. Get a quote and see how much you could save today.

geico.com | 1-800-947-AUTO | local office

GEICO®

1st Round					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

Some discounts, coverages, payment plans and features are not available in all states or all GEICO companies. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, Washington, D.C. 20076; a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. © 2015 GEICO





THE PROSPECTOR

Colts GM Ryan Grigson has unearthed roster puzzle pieces on Day 1 of the draft and on Day 3, in basketball gyms and in far-off countries. As for finding balance in his dream job? That's the holy grail

BY MICHAEL ROSENBERG

Photograph by
AJ Mast
For Sports Illustrated
Photo Illustration
by SI Premedia

→ **START WITH COFFEE.** It is the scout's restorative, and when Ryan Grigson was young and combing the nation for football talent, he would drink 10 cups a day. "Peak concentration," he says. Can't have the eyelids drooping in the fourth hour of a film session.

Grigson is the Colts' general manager now, and he is down to three cups a day. He walks into Café Patachou, in the Meridian-Kessler neighborhood of Indianapolis, and orders one. This is the kind of place where you grab a mug and fill up; most customers just pick the nearest one. Grigson, though, surveys them all before making his decision.

"Aren't they all the same?" asks a waitress.

No, he says. They're very different. The one he chooses today is slightly wider, sturdier, even a little bigger than the others—although I can't really tell the difference when he points this out. But the waitress realizes he is right. Not long ago, Café Patachou ordered new mugs. Grigson grabbed one of the old ones.

To Grigson, scouting is not just a skill. It's a state of mind, and it doesn't stop when the film does. A scout should know where to eat on the road, and which hotel to choose, even if he has only been to a town once before. A scout who routinely eats at Olive Garden will always like the same players that other scouts like. Back in the days when Grigson visited college programs every week,

he would ask for a room at that school's facility where he could watch film alone, away from the other scouts.

Under Grigson, the Colts may lead the NFL in turning over stones. This off-season, they signed former Georgia Tech basketball center Demarco Cox, who is 6' 8", 294 pounds and will come to training camp as a tackle, but who hasn't played football since high

school. Indy also picked up CFL receiver Duron Carter, the son of Hall of Fame wideout Cris Carter. The younger Carter's maturity has been questioned, and after winning the genetic lottery he took a roundabout path to the NFL—Ohio State, Coffeyville Community College (after being deemed academically ineligible for the Buckeyes) and then the Canadian Football League. But Grigson thinks Carter's ready, at 24, to help the Colts.

Grigson needs to be creative, because the draft you've been hearing about for the past few months is not Grigson's draft—at least, not in the way that it is the Buccaneers' or the Titans' or the Jaguars' draft. Jameis Winston

or Marcus Mariota? Doesn't matter to Grigson. He has Andrew Luck. Should Alabama's Amari Cooper be the first receiver taken, or should it be West Virginia's Kevin White? That doesn't matter, either. Both will be long gone by the time Indianapolis picks at No. 29, unless Grigson makes a stunning trade.

Grigson doesn't need rookie star power. What he needs are solid starters or backups who can make big plays in key moments—the way that defensive end Jonathan Newsome, a fifth-round pick last year out of Ball State, forced Peyton Manning to fumble in this year's divisional-playoff win over the Broncos.

Grigson sits down at Café Patachou. It is late February and the NFL combine, at the Colts' home stadium, has just concluded. In bars and in hotel lobbies throughout downtown Indianapolis and across the U.S., televisions had been tuned to the event's endless stream of jumps and leaps. But from his seat at Lucas Oil Stadium, Grigson mostly ignored what was happening on the field. Sure, once in a while one of Grigson's colleagues alerted him that a Player of Interest was performing a drill, and he looked up. But mostly he watched game footage of prospects on his iPad.

He is wary of players who come in with spotty college careers and then make first-team All-Combine, and of evaluators who dismiss

When Grigson releases a player, he turns the music down. “If some guy comes in and ‘BABY LOVE’ IS ON,” he doesn’t want that to be the soundtrack for being cut.



ANDREW LUCK
ROUND 1
2012

DWAYNE ALLEN
ROUND 3
2012

T.Y. HILTON
ROUND 3
2012

VONTAE DAVIS
TRADE
2012

ANDRE JOHNSON
FREE AGENT
2015

FRANK GORE
FREE AGENT
2015

players with good track records but poor predraft measurables. He remembers running back LeSean McCoy—who had run for 35 TDs and nearly 3,000 yards in two seasons at Pittsburgh—falling to the 53rd pick in 2009 partly because of a poor vertical jump at his pro day. (McCoy missed the combine with the flu.) The three-time Pro Bowler has since had four 1,000-yard seasons. Now nobody cares if he can dunk.

“I don’t mess with the board at all postcombine,” Grigson says. “I’ve worked places where it’s completely rearranged after the combine. *Completely*. I’ve seen a lot of things where I said, That’s what I *won’t* do. It’s what pisses you off as a scout. We all agreed that this guy was a first-round talent—and now we’re moving him to the bottom of the third based on what he did in *one drill*?”

Grigson, who took over as Indy’s GM before the 2012 season, is 43, the architect of a team that, in his tenure, reached the wild-card round, then the division round and then, in January, the conference championship. This is the job Grigson wanted for most of his adult life, the chance to build a Super Bowl contender. There’s only one problem.

“The term ‘building’ is a fallacy,” he says. “We ‘build’ on the fly.”

SOMETIMES a player will be summoned to Grigson’s office and sit at the big conference table in front. Music is almost always playing, usually something that Grigson would have heard as a kid in Northwest Indiana, riding around in his dad’s Chrysler Cordoba: Stevie Wonder, Kenny Rogers, Jefferson Airplane, the Eagles. . . .

When Grigson releases a player, he usually turns the music down, because “if some guy comes in and ‘Baby Love’ by the Supremes is on,” Grigson doesn’t want that to be the soundtrack for being cut.

*All you do is treat me bad
Break my heart and leave me sad*

When the player walks out, he may be angry or bitter, determined or relieved. But he probably won’t realize: That wasn’t Grigson’s real office.

FROM LEFT: BILL FRANKS FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED; JOHN W. McDONOUGH FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED; DAVID E. KLUTHO FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED; ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES; BOB LEVY/GETTY IMAGES; EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES



His *real* office, the one where he gets his best work done, is nestled behind the one with the conference table. This is where he has a recliner called the Beast, a fridge, a coffee maker, a table for his laptop, and the centerpiece of his job: a wall-mounted depth chart that he could happily study for hours.

"There is nothing I love more," he says.

The door to this office stays locked. Players are never, ever allowed in, and this is why: The chart is color-coded. If a name is in green, Grigson wants to re-sign that player. The ones in blue have character issues. The ones in black are on their way out. Some are labeled IBG. These are Injury Bug Guys.

For Grigson, every day is a battle to get into the real office. If a GM isn't careful he can spend all day dealing with administrative issues—talking to agents, managing employees, meeting with the business staff and putting out little fires. He won't have time to find and evaluate players. This is why Grigson arrives at work at 6 a.m., without

having showered. He sits in the Beast and watches film for two hours, then takes a shower and starts the rest of his workday.

Grigson was an experienced scout with the Eagles when Colts owner Jim Irsay hired him to this job. But he had never dealt with the myriad issues that face a GM every day. He was overwhelmed. During one early meeting about the salary cap, he felt a sensation that he'd never experienced in his professional life: "I was almost getting physically ill. I was trying to do too many things."

In his fourth year, he is getting better with the NFL's complicated economics, but he still puts his full trust in Indianapolis's salary-cap expert, Mike Bluem, and in general counsel Dan Emerson. When Grigson's assistant, Lisa Andrzejewski, emails him every day, she always finishes with the same message, at Grigson's request: "Get back to your scouting roots." Irsay always tells Grigson that he wants him in "the engine room," the metaphorical intersection of the coaching staff and the front office.

But even that keeps Grigson from doing what many fans assume he is doing. He rarely travels to college games or practices, "because when I leave [Indy], something always comes up," he says. "If something comes up on the [waiver] wire when I'm at a school watching tape, I might miss out on a guy that can help us *now*."

In Grigson's first season, after he took Luck with the No. 1 pick, the Colts shocked the league by improving from 2–14 to 11–5. But after their playoff loss to the Ravens, Grigson looked down on the field and thought, for the only time in his career, that his team couldn't win. Luck could barely set his feet before getting hit. After the team flew home, Grigson went to his office and wrote "PROTECT 12" on a piece of paper. It is still on his desk.

Grigson thinks of his roster as a bonsai tree. "I am constantly pruning it," he says. During the season, most of his early-morning video watching is of the Colts, so he can decide which names should be green and which ones should be black. Toward the end of the year he starts watching pending free agents from other teams, and eventually he sprinkles in film of college prospects at positions of need.

This is the reverse of how most fans think a GM's job works. We focus on high draft choices first, free agents second and then the back end of the roster last. But Grigson must first understand his own team's needs. He prides himself on churning the last spots on his roster, maximizing late-round draft picks and finding players in unconventional places. This is the heart of his job, and the best chance to help the Colts move from contender to champion.

"We have a mind-set where we want to build a dynasty," Grigson says, "because we have the quarterback to do it."

OVER LUNCH at Café Patachou, Grigson is trying to explain all the things that can derail a player's career, but a word escapes him. "I can't believe I can't think of this word," he says. "Oh my Lord! The combine wears you out. It's things that entice you. . . . This is crazy."

"Temptations?"

"Temptations! Yes."

Temptations can derail franchises too. Grigson admits that he can be emotional. But in order to win he must resist the allure of

POINT OF PURCHASE

The view from above is promising: Through savvy drafting, trades and thrifty free-agency dealings, Grigson has built a Super Bowl contender in just three years.

COLT HERO

After his team went 2-14 in 2011, Irsay (right, near) entrusted Grigson to right the ship. Indy hasn't missed the playoffs since.

trading way up in the draft in exchange for an undeniable talent; he must fight the urge to overpay for the best free agents.

He has three kinds of currency—players, draft picks, money—and he must use them all wisely. Some moves involve players, some involve draft choices, and some involve both. But they all involve money, in salaries paid, salaries inherited, salaries saved.

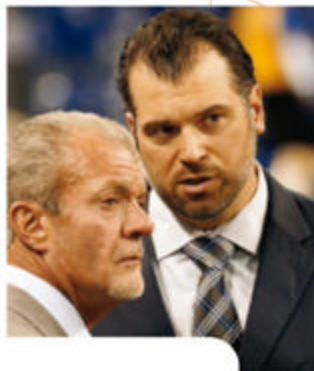
GMs must weigh money whenever they make a decision. This helps explain the most-discussed move of Grigson's tenure: trading a first-round pick to the Browns for running back Trent Richardson in September 2013.

The move failed. Richardson, the No. 3 pick in 2012, was a bust in Indianapolis and was released last month. But a decision that two years ago may have seemed impetuous was actually quite calculated. Richardson's draft-choice price was expensive, but in actual dollars he came incredibly cheap. Cleveland had already paid his \$13.34 million signing bonus and taken the cap hit that came with it. The Colts paid him just \$3.57 million total, for two seasons (and could have had him under team control for two more seasons at a low salary). Grigson thought the combined risk, in salary and a draft choice, was worth taking to get a guy who was considered one of the most talented players in the draft just a year earlier. "I'll do that every single time," Grigson says.

A similar calculation explains the Colts' recent moves in free agency. They needed a strong interior D-lineman and were mentioned prominently in virtually every list of teams thought to be pursuing Ndamukong Suh. But Grigson resisted temptation. Suh would have had to transition from a 4-3 to a 3-4 defense (a substantial adjustment, even for an All-Pro player), and the price tag was too great. Assuming the Colts sign Luck to a mammoth contract extension, they don't want nearly \$50 million per season tied up in just two players.

Instead, Indianapolis signed running back Frank Gore and receiver Andre Johnson, filling two more glaring holes. Both have been described as "win-now" moves because Gore will be 32 and Johnson 34 this fall. But they are also low-risk moves that give the Colts flexibility in the future. After this season, Gore is only guaranteed \$3 million; Johnson \$2.5 million. Indy also signed former Eagles linebacker Trent Cole and Broncos linebacker Nate Irving to similar low-risk deals with a big potential payoff.

Grigson, a devout Catholic, often prays in his office—sometimes for his family or for strength, but often for wisdom. "Wisdom crushes



"I'LL DO THAT EVERY SINGLE TIME," Grigson says of his widely panned trade for former No. 3 pick Trent Richardson—which, people forget, cost very little in actual dollars.

intelligence at every turn," he says. That's why Andrzejewski's daily emails also include this nugget: "Wisdom is to call something by its right name." It is a reminder not to overthink.

"When I have to talk myself into liking a guy, or when I have to watch six tapes to think I might take him—that's usually when I miss," Grigson says. "You don't want that guy. You want the guys who pop."

When a guy pops, Grigson remembers, even if he doesn't draft him. He thinks back to the only time he ever saw a college freshman and wrote, on his report, "He could play in the NFL right now." That was an Illinois cornerback named Vontae Davis. Six years later

Davis was struggling with the Dolphins when Grigson dealt a second-round pick for him. Davis did not cede a single touchdown last year, his first as a Pro Bowler.

If you turn over as many stones as the Colts do, you have to be willing to get your hands dirty. Grigson knows that every Super Bowl champion has employed players whom you wouldn't ask to babysit your kids. He will not draft a player he deems a character risk in the first four rounds.

After that he will consider it, as long as the player has the potential to be a starter.

"Usually these aren't the cleanest guys, or they don't learn well, or they have some sort of drug issue, or maybe they don't fit in society well," he says. "But between the white lines, they can go all day. That's their sanctuary."

The risks are not all character-based. Sometimes this hypothetical late-rounder played at a small school, against weak competition or had a disappointing senior year. Maybe he will have to learn a new position. But at some point in this draft, after those first four rounds, Grigson will see a name on the Colts' board, "just staring at you." And suddenly one of those projects will be the highest-rated player left on the board.

Somebody in the room will ask, "Why don't we take him?"

By that time the hype will be gone, the TV audience will be limited, and most fans will be outside, reveling in a spring Saturday. But the Colts might just turn over a stone and find the last piece of a Super Bowl champion. □

MY MOM DIDN'T HAVE MANY OPTIONS. TODAY'S LUNG CANCER PATIENTS DO.

Twenty years ago, my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. She had very few places to turn, and lost a difficult struggle.

Today, we are on the brink of real breakthroughs in lung cancer research and there are significantly improved treatment options.

Tony Goldwyn
Stand Up To Cancer
Ambassador

And yet, more than 30% of all lung cancer patients still don't know about the therapies, specialists, and clinical trials available to them.

Lung cancer is a formidable foe, but we are finding new ways to fight it. Please visit SU2C.org/LungCancer for questions to ask your health care professional and to learn about options that may be right for you.



Photo Credit: Kevin Lynch



Bristol-Myers Squibb

**STAND
UP TO
CANCER**
SU2C.org/LungCancer

Stand Up To Cancer is a program of the Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF), a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



DRAFT LAUNDRY LIST

Even the Super Bowl champs have holes to fill. (Goodbye, Darrelle Revis.) Here's where your team ought to start

BY BEN BASKIN

East



The playoffs are in sight, but neither EJ Manuel nor Matt Cassel will be the starter if these Bills ever reach the Super Bowl. It will be hard, however, to find a **franchise QB** with pick No. 50, Buffalo's first. Also a tricky find: the type of **interior lineman** who can put some jolt into the NFL's No. 25 rushing attack.



Ndamukong Suh fortifies the D-line. Now it's time to do the same for the **O-line**: Miami had the second-worst pass-blocking unit in '14. With Mike Wallace sold for pennies on the dollar, a **field-stretching WR** would also help.



It's not the Patriot Way to use an early pick on an **O-lineman** or a **WR**, but those spots are where Tom Brady needs the most help. A **CB to fill in for Darrelle Revis** should also be on the docket.



Geno Smith, it seems, is not the Jets' guy. Ryan Fitzpatrick is not their guy. **New York still needs a QB**—and while past regimes could be counted on to draft the wrong one, there's hope under a new front office that already improved WR and CB depth in free agency. (It should do the same for **both guard spots and the backfield**.)

North



Torrey Smith is gone and Steve Smith turns 36 next month; a **playmaking early-round WR** is needed. And while the Ravens expect Jimmy Smith (foot) to return healthy, their **secondary** was atrocious in '14. Expect renovations.



All three of the Bengals' early selections ought to go toward **improving their line-on both sides** of the ball. Pro Football Focus ranked Domata Peko as the NFL's worst DT in '14 (minimum: 600 snaps), so a **space-clogger to flank Geno Atkins** could be target number 1.



Do they draft another **franchise-hopeful QB**, or rely wholly on journeyman Josh McCown? Will Josh Gordon play in Cleveland again, or should it dip into the **deep WR draft pool**? The NFL's worst rush D needs an overhaul too; a **game-changing NT** would be the fastest fix.



The Steelers' once-vaunted D was not so vaunted in '14. To start, they need to **improve at CB and find a consistent edge-rusher at OLB**. James Harrison's return from retirement is a stopgap; time to **look to the future**.

South



Chris Myers didn't miss a start over the past eight years—then the Texans cut their center to save \$8 million. **Someone has to snap the ball** to new QB Brian Hoyer, who also needs a **big target to replace Andre Johnson**.



Andrew Luck's plummeting sack numbers (41 to 32 to 27 over his first three years) say more about his improving pocket presence than the Colts' **linemen**, only one of whom was rated positively in pass blocking in '14 by Pro Football Focus. **Center** Jonotthan Harrison, at the very least, needs replacing.



Blake Bortles showed glimmers of promise at the end of '14. If the Jags are to turn around, they need to **improve his line**, which in '14 allowed 71 sacks, third most this century. They also need to accept that Toby Gerhart is not an **RB1**.



The Titans filled their LB holes through free agency; a **pass-rushing DE** is the obvious defensive choice with pick No. 2. There's also a **glaring need at safety**; George Wilson and Michael Griffin ranked in the league's bottom six at the position.

West



The Broncos need to protect their quadragenarian-to-be QB; look for them to draft an **OT with pick No. 28** and take a mid-round flier on a **prospect to learn under Peyton Manning**. The NFL's No. 2 run-stopping D lost Terrance Knighton to free agency. They'll look for a **hole-plugging NT**.



Even with Derrick Johnson returning from an Achilles tear, the Chiefs need to **bolster their ILB corps**, which was among the worst in the NFL. Free agent Jeremy Maclin was only the start of a needed **WR revamp**; this team got zero TDs from wideouts in '14.



The jury is still out on second-year QB Derek Carr; the Raiders can help him by getting some **WR weapons**. A **pass-rushing specialist** is also a must. Oakland had just 22 sacks in '14, second worst in the NFL.



Philip Rivers is used to having a **dependable RB** behind him, but Ryan Mathews is gone. Don't be shocked if the Chargers take the first RB off the board at No. 17 and then help the rookie with an **O-line overhaul**. San Diego ranked 31st in run blocking last year.

East



The Cowboys had the fifth-ranked scoring offense each of the last two seasons; it's time to improve on the other side of the ball. Expect the **D-line** to be targeted first, then **secondary depth**. Taking a flier RB wouldn't be a bad idea either. Darren McFadden is, well, *Darren McFadden*.



The Giants need to shore up the O-line; they **could take a RT at No. 9** and move Justin Pugh inside. The franchise has been missing a **playmaker** since LB Antonio Pierce retired in 2010. With the loss of SS Antrell Rolle, they need one in the secondary too.



Defense is the key word for Chip Kelly. The Eagles filled in CB holes through free agency but still need a safety and edge-rushing LBs. Don't be surprised if Kelly **picks up a QB early**. The over/under for games played by Sam Bradford? Try eight.



The Skins' D allowed the most receiving TDs last season, 35, so a **completely new secondary** would be ideal. If RG3 is to get a fair chance to reclaim his rookie glory, his blockers need to keep him upright. **RT is the biggest concern**.

North



Alshon Jeffrey is a stud, but **the WR needs help** after the Bears traded away Brandon Marshall. Don't be surprised if they take a **QB prospect** early; *do* be surprised if Jay Cutler's facial expression changes one iota in response.



An offense predicated on Matt Stafford's throwing deep to Calvin Johnson needs **a line that can provide time** for those plays to develop—but the Lions don't have that. Also, with Reggie Bush gone, Detroit needs **someone to spell RB Joiqee Bell**.



Clay Matthews proved he can dominate from inside, but Green Bay requires a **first-round-caliber ILB** so Matthews can move back to his normal OLB spot. The Pack lost two of their top three CBs in free agency; they'll be looking for **someone to pair with Sam Shields**.



Protecting a maturing Teddy Bridgewater is imperative. They re-signed RG Joe Berger; now they **need to address LG**, where Charlie Johnson was abysmal last year. Minnesota struggled against the run in '14; a **wide-bodied DT or a run-stopping MLB** could ameliorate that.

South



All positions are in play on a D that allowed the most yards per game and had the second-fewest sacks in '14. It'd be smart (though difficult) to get Matt Ryan a Tony Gonzalez **replacement at TE**.



Please get QB Cam Newton some help. *Please*. The Panthers' **O-line** was terrible in '14. And while rookie WR Kelvin Benjamin impressed, Newton needs **someone to turn to when his WR1 is doubled**. A RB to complement (or replace) Jonathan Stewart would help.



The Saints already added FA Brandon Browner, but Rob Ryan's D couldn't cover anyone in '14; **another CB** would help. The best way to conceal a shoddy secondary is with QB pressure—but New Orleans stunk at that too. They'll look for a **pass rusher**, likely a 4-3 OLB.



If Jameis Winston or Mariota is the No. 1 pick, the Bucs need to help him with a **right guard** and (if Demar Dotson moves full time to LT) a **right tackle**. On D, a **playmaking safety** ought to be on the list to fill out the secondary.

West



Free-agent OLB LaMarr Woodley fills a desperate need in the Cards' pass rush, but he's five years removed from a double-digit sack season. A **pass-covering ILB** would be a nice complement, as Larry Foote was miserable at this task in '14.



If the 49ers aren't targeting a QB—recent trade rumors suggest they are—then a **WR for Colin Kaepernick to throw to** makes sense. A rash of recent retirements turned **ILB** from a position of strength into one of need, so they'll look for one in the draft too.



Top need: a new goal line strategy—or the type of **No. 1 WR** the Seahawks might have dialed up in the final minute of SBXLIX. With Byron Maxwell gone, a **CB to play alongside Richard Sherman** is needed. Tharold Simon is not that guy.



Scott Wells was the worst-rated center in the NFL in '14 according to Pro Football Focus, and LT Jake Long was an injury-prone train wreck. Both are gone. Considering that 2014 No. 2 pick Greg Robinson was terrible in relief of Long, **almost every position on the Rams' line is due for an upgrade**.



1

BUCCANEERS
JAMEIS WINSTON

QUARTERBACK
FLORIDA STATE

Mariota and Leonard Williams remain possibilities—but if the Bucs trust Winston the person, they'll pull the trigger on Winston the quarterback.



2

TITANS
LEONARD WILLIAMS

DEF. TACKLE
USC

Williams would bolster the D-line, but this is arguably the NFL's least-talented roster, so a trade down for more picks could be a play.



3

JAGUARS
VIC BEASLEY

OUTSIDE LB
CLEMSON

O-line help can come later. This boils down to which edge defender the Jags like most. Beasley would fit Gus Bradley's "Leo" role well.



4

RAIDERS
AMARI COOPER

WIDE RECEIVER
ALABAMA

Watch for a trade; Oakland could slide back and still add receiver help. But Cooper is the go-to threat that this offense needs.



5

REDSKINS
DANTE FOWLER JR.

DEF. END/OLB
FLORIDA

An impact O-lineman should fall to the Skins in round 2, but they can't wait till then to find a defender to match Fowler's potential.



6

JETS
MARCUS MARIOTA

QUARTERBACK
OREGON

Todd Bowles would get the most out of Shane Ray or Randy Gregory. But the new Jets coach needs a franchise QB and has no ties to Geno Smith.



7

BEARS
KEVIN WHITE

WIDE RECEIVER
WEST VIRGINIA

No Danny Shelton? New DC Vic Fangio thrived in San Fran without a massive DT. The dazzling White fills a Brandon Marshall-sized hole.



8

FALCONS
BRANDON SCHERFF

TACKLE
IOWA

Atlanta could use Ray, but this team is built around passing, pointing the needle in the direction of a first-round O-line pick for the second year in a row.

MOCK *Round 1* DRAFT



17

CHARGERS
ERECK FLOWERS

TACKLE
MIAMI

The Todd Gurley/Melvin Gordon watch starts with this pick—but adding Flowers would slide D.J. Fluker inside on a formidable O-line.



18

CHIEFS
ERIC KENDRICKS

LINEBACKER
UCLA

His rangy game will fit well in K.C.'s linebacking corps, especially with 32-year-old Derrick Johnson's career turning for home.



19

BROWNS
ANDRUS PEAT

From Bills

TACKLE
STANFORD

He'd knock Mitchell Schwartz out of the Browns' RT position immediately and be ticketed for Joe Thomas's LT job down the line.



20

EAGLES
ARIK ARMSTEAD

DEFENSIVE END
OREGON

You have to give any Oregon product a slight Chip Kelly-related bump. Armstead's game would be an intriguing fit in Philly.



21

BENGALS
MALCOM BROWN

DEF. TACKLE
TEXAS

Domata Peko's days are few if a big body like Brown arrives. A downhill LB—Denzel Perryman, Benardrick McKinney—also fits the bill.



22

STEELERS
KEVIN JOHNSON

CORNERBACK
WAKE FOREST

Time for the Steelers to begin their CB youth movement. Dupree makes sense here too, even with 2013 first-round pick Jarvis Jones still around.



23

LIONS
D.J. HUMPHRIES

TACKLE
FLORIDA

GM Martin Mayhew goes best-player-available, almost to a fault. If it's not Gurley here, then Humphries is an immediate starter up front.



24

CARDINALS
BUD DUPREE

DEF. END/OLB
KENTUCKY

Would Arizona prefer to generate more pressure off the edge or (as in 2014) by blitzing up the middle? Dupree would aid the former.

BILL FRANKS FOR SI (WINSTON); JOHN W. McDONOUGH FOR SI (WILLIAMS); JOSHUA S. KELLY/USA TODAY SPORTS (BEASLEY); AL. TELEMAN FOR SI (COOPER); ROBERT BECK FOR SI (MARIOTA); JOHN WEAST/GETTY IMAGES (WHITE); JEFF HAYNES FOR SI (SCHERFF); JEREMY MCININCH/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (FLOWERS); TONY GUTIERREZ/AP (KENDRICKS); BOB STANFORD/USA TODAY SPORTS (PEAT); BRIAN WILKINSON/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (ARMSTEAD); JEFF HAYNES FOR SI (BROWN); BRIAN WILKINSON/USA TODAY SPORTS (JOHNSON); FREDERICK BREEDON/GETTY IMAGES (HUMPHRIES); WADE RAYNE/AP (DUPREE)



9

GIANTS
DEVANTE
PARKERWIDE RECEIVER
LOUISVILLE

Parker and Odell Beckham Jr. together? Eli Manning says, *Thanks!*, and the Giants get to avoid the temptation of rushing Victor Cruz back early.



10

RAMS
LA'EL
COLLINSTACKLE
LSU

If Winston/Mariota or any of the top three WRs are available, the Rams might jump. If not, the choice comes down to La'el or Landon Collins.



11

VIKINGS
TRAE
WAYNESCORNERBACK
MICHIGAN STATE

The Vikings would love to find a CB to pair with 2013 first-rounder Xavier Rhodes. A possible wild card: the multifaceted Shaq Thompson.



12

BROWNS
DANNY
SHELTONDEF. TACKLE
WASHINGTON

Cleveland absolutely has to upgrade its run defense, and the Dwayne Bowe and Brian Hartline free-agent additions provide some leeway at WR.



13

SAINTS
RANDY
GREGORYDEF. END/OLB
NEBRASKA

Gregory's fall after a failed drug test will be intriguing. Having traded away Jimmy Graham and Kenny Stills, the Saints could pounce on a WR here, too—or at 31.



14

DOLPHINS
LANDON
COLLINSSAFETY
ALABAMA

He's a long-term answer at safety (while incumbent Louis Delmas is a short-term one). Alternates: Marcus Peters or Kevin Johnson.



15

49ERS
SHANE
RAYDEFENSIVE END
MISSOURI

Aldon Smith could be a free agent in '16, and Ahmad Brooks's future as a Niner is up in the air, so San Fran plans for the future.



16

TEXANS
SHAQ
THOMPSONLINEBACKER
WASHINGTON

This Swiss Army knife is the piece the Texans need at ILB. Bud Dupree would be appealing if there's any doubt about Jadeveon Clowney's knee.

Nothing to mock here. SI examined team needs, factored in our prospect rankings, accounted for wild cards (hello, Chip Kelly) and drafted up a perfect-world rounds 1 and 2

BY CHRIS BURKE



25

PANTHERS
T.J.
CLEMMINGSTACKLE
PITTSBURGH

Easy call: OT or WR. If they don't think Clemmings is ready to step in on the left immediately, the Panthers could gamble on Breshad Perriman here.



26

RAVENS
TODD
GURLEYRUNNING BACK
GEORGIA

Running back is not a position of desperate need in Baltimore, making the brilliant (but still-on-the-mend) Gurley a perfect slow play.



27

COWBOYS
MARCUS
PETERSCORNERBACK
WASHINGTON

A steal at a spot where Dallas could use an NFL-ready option. That is, if Jerry Jones decides not to go prospecting for his next star RB here.



28

BRONCOS
MAXX
WILLIAMSTIGHT END
MINNESOTA

For \$38 million less than Julius Thomas, Denver lands a TE with similar skills. But coach Gary Kubiak might want a nimble OL instead—say, Erving.



29

COLTS
JORDAN
PHILLIPSDEF. TACKLE
OKLAHOMA

Perryman and McKinney are options, given Indy's poor LB situation. But Phillips would help stop plays from even reaching that second level.



30

PACKERS
OWAMAGBE
ODIGHIZUWADEFENSIVE END
UCLA

A little out of the box on this one, but Julius Peppers is 35 and Odighizuwa's run-stopping skills would mesh well with Peppers's style.



31

SAINTS
BRESHAD
PERRIMAN
*From Seahawks*WIDE RECEIVER
CENTRAL FLORIDA

Having added Gregory at 13, the Saints focus on O. Or: The trading of OG Ben Grubbs means A.J. Cann or Laken Tomlinson would fit here.



32

PATRIOTS
CAMERON
ERVINGCENTER
FLORIDA STATE

The beauty in picking Erving here is that he can push his old FSU teammate Bryan Stork at center or help elsewhere along the O-line.



33

TITANS
JAKE FISHER

TACKLE
OREGON

Right tackle is a chasm for the Titans, and Fisher could start right away. Another issue: running back. Could Melvin Gordon hear his name here?

34

BUCCANEERS
PRESTON SMITH

DEFENSIVE END
MISSISSIPPI ST.

A year after misfiring on free agent Michael Johnson, the Bucs go back to the DE well. The guy just taken, Fisher, is another one Tampa could use.

35

RAIDERS
MELVIN GORDON

RUNNING BACK
WISCONSIN

Whether or not anyone's noticed, Oakland has pieced together an O-line capable of mauling the opposition. Gordon gives them a legit No. 1 back.

36

JAGUARS
JALEN COLLINS

CORNERBACK
LSU

The Jags add a nice complement to free agent Davon House in the secondary. . . . Or they could wait on the defense and gain O-line depth here.

37

JETS
ELI HAROLD

DEF. END/OLB
VIRGINIA

The Jets get a badly needed disruptive edge defender. Should they stick to D, they could set off a RB run by finding a partner for Chris Ivory.

38

REDSKINS
LAKEN TOMLINSON

GUARD
DUKE

Tomlinson is arguably the draft's top guard. But Eric Rowe or Derron Smith might be on the board at this pick, and the Skins are weak at safety.

39

BEARS
EDDIE GOLDMAN

DEF. TACKLE
FLORIDA STATE

He would ease Chicago's move to a 3-4 D. Consider too those safeties mentioned at 38; 32-year-old FA Antrel Rolle's stay is likely to be short.

40

GIANTS
ERIC ROWE

CORNERBACK
UTAH

The Giants have a starting spot open for Rowe at safety—many believe the former Ute is better off there than at corner anyway.

MOCK *Round 2* DRAFT



49

CHIEFS
DORIAL GREEN-BECKHAM

WIDE RECEIVER
MISSOURI

In WRs Jeremy Maclin, Albert Wilson and De'Anthony Thomas, K.C. has some playmakers—but no one who can win on the outside.

50

BILLS
BENARDRICK MCKINNEY

LINEBACKER
MISSISSIPPI ST.

The Bills' first pick nets them a 246-pound fill-in for free agent Brandon Spikes. (But yes, they might also consider a QB.)

51

TEXANS
RONALD DARBY

CORNERBACK
FLORIDA STATE

Johnathan Joseph could be a free agent in '16 and Darby has No. 1 CB traits. Houston may also seek a WR here with Andre Johnson gone.

52

EAGLES
PHILLIP DORSETT

WIDE RECEIVER
MIAMI

Dorsett's home run skills give him an edge over the WR options. Or, having missed out on Mariota, Chip Kelly may eyeball Hundley here.

53

BENGALS
CEDRIC OGBUEHI

TACKLE
TEXAS A&M

He'd be a classic Cincy pick—he could help at multiple spots, even coming off a knee injury, and should grow over the next few seasons.

54

LIONS
MICHAEL BENNETT

DEF. TACKLE
OHIO STATE

While no one can replace Ndamukong Suh, Bennett's three-technique pass rushing plus Haloti Ngata's run D would ease the transition.

55

CARDINALS
P.J. WILLIAMS

CORNERBACK
FLORIDA STATE

Arizona cashed in by taking a chance on safety Tyrann Mathieu in '13 and can do the same here with Williams, who was once seen as a first-rounder.

56

STEELERS
CLIVE WALFORD

TIGHT END
MIAMI

Under the assumption that Heath Miller cannot play forever, the Steelers draft his future replacement, who they can use now in two-TE sets.

MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP (FISHER); RICHIE MILLEP/CSM/AP (PRESTON SMITH); BRIAN BLANCO/GETTY IMAGES (GORDON); DERRICK E. HANKS/USA TODAY SPORTS (COLLINS); LEE COLEMAN/CON. SPORTSMAN (HAROLD); BRETT DAVIS/USA TODAY SPORTS (TOMLINSON); FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP (GOLDMAN); RUSSELL LANSFORD/CON. SPORTSMAN (ROWE); KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES (GREEN-BECKHAM); SPURGE DERDER/USA TODAY SPORTS (MCKINNEY); DOUG BENCAP (DARBY); JOEL AUBRECHT/GETTY IMAGES (DORSETT); WOLFORD; CHARLES MITCHELL/CON. SPORTSMAN (OGBUEHI); JAY LARDET/AP (BENNETT); BILL FRANKS FOR SI (WILLIAMS)



41

RAMS
A.J. CANNGUARD
SOUTH CAROLINA

And just like that, with Collins and Cann, the Rams' offensive line morphs from a question mark to a position of strength.



42

FALCONS
DANIELLE HUNTERDEFENSIVE END
LSU

Hunter's a work in progress, but the Falcons aren't in a position to be choosy. They can't go another pick in this draft without a pass rusher.



43

BROWNS
DEVIN SMITHWIDE RECEIVER
OHIO STATE

In theory, Brian Hartline or Andrew Hawkins could help stretch the field. Smith *definitely* can. Clive Walford, at TE, would be the less sexy choice.



44

SAINTS
BYRON JONESCORNERBACK
UCONN

The Saints snag the combine star, leaving questions about who'll eventually replace Drew Brees. (How about Brett Hundley here?)



45

VIKINGS
DENZEL PERRYMANLINEBACKER
MIAMI

Behind the Vikes' front four (and beside Anthony Barr) Perryman will be a tackling machine. This team needs OT depth, but it'd be a stretch to look here.



46

49ERS
PAUL DAWSONLINEBACKER
TCU

They'll eye P.J. Williams (whose DUI arrest is less of an issue in round 2) but, minus Patrick Willis and Chris Borland, will opt for an aggressive ILB.



47

DOLPHINS
JAELEN STRONGWIDE RECEIVER
ARIZONA STATE

Strong, Kenny Stills and Jarvis Landry would form a dangerous triple threat. For RB help, Ameer Abdullah and Duke Johnson are still out there.



48

CHARGERS
CARL DAVISDEF. TACKLE
IOWA

San Diego could follow Miami's footsteps by filling a skill position—Green-Beckham?—but Davis is a safer pick for a team seeking muscle.



57

PANTHERS
NELSON AGHOLORWIDE RECEIVER
USC

Kelvin Benjamin was seen as raw entering last year's draft—and then caught 73 passes. Agholor is even better prepared for the NFL.



58

RAVENS
ALEX CARTERCORNERBACK
STANFORD

Carter would add size and depth to a secondary that can only improve. Joe Flacco would also welcome WR Devin Funchess's downfield talents here.



59

BRONCOS
ALI MARPETCENTER
HOBART

Marpet's fleet feet must have coach Gary Kubiak interested. A little depth on D should be on the table too—namely, help along the line.



60

COWBOYS
JAY AJAYIRUNNING BACK
BOISE STATE

Ajayi racked up 397 touches last season—just 52 fewer than the now-departed DeMarco Murray had for Dallas (and in two fewer games).



61

COLTS
DERRON SMITHSAFETY
FRESNO STATE

The draft's second safety finally comes off the board, to a team woefully undermanned there. (And the Colts *still* need a linebacker.)



62

PACKERS
STEPHONE ANTHONYLINEBACKER
CLEMSON

Unless Perryman, Dawson or McKinney falls to this spot, there's a good bargain here. Able-bodied CBs ought to be on high alert too.



63

SEAHAWKS
HRONISS GRASUCENTER
OREGON

An obvious—too obvious?—solution to Seattle dealing away center Max Unger this spring: Draft the guy who replaced him at Oregon.



64

PATRIOTS
MARCUS HARDISONDEF. TACKLE
ARIZONA STATE

The Pats upgrade in the trenches; Hardison can be a productive rotational guy right away. A WR like the underrated Tyler Lockett works too.

JOHN RAQUIL/AP (CANN, ANTHONY); STACY REBER/GETTY IMAGES (HUNTER); AL TELEMAN FOR SI (DEVIN SMITH); MICHAEL Dwyer/AP (JONES); TOM DIPACE (PERRYMAN); KEVIN KRAJKA/USA TODAY SPORTS (DAWSON); VICTOR DECLON/GETTY IMAGES (STRONG); MATTHEW PUTNEY/AP (DAVIS); HARRY HOW/GETTY IMAGES (AGHOLOR); MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP (CARTER); KEVIN COLTON/HOBART COLLEGE (MARPET); RICK SCUTER/AP (AJAYI); MARC SANCHEZ/ICON SPORTSWIRE (DERRON SMITH); KEVIN CASEY/GETTY IMAGES (GRASU); RICK SCUTER/AP (HARDISON)



THE ROAD TO

SUPER BOWL, IN THE ROUND

All time Super Bowl totals, by draft position



Every NFL team had a shot at the two players who made the biggest impact on Super Bowl XLIX: Tom Brady was passed over 198 times at the 2000 draft and Malcolm Butler went unpicked through all 256 choices last year. In other words, mess this up, and it'll matter in February
BY BEN BASKIN

ROUND	PASSING YARDS
1	10,473
2	1,779
3	3,298
4	898
5	177
6	2,445
7+	0
UFA	1,854

Tom Brady
PATRIOTS
1,605

TACKLES
632
559
331
222
241
138
88
386

ROUND	RUSHING YARDS
1	4,206
2	1,816
3	1,206
4	828
5	757
6	420
7+	341
UFA	706

Willie Parker
STEELERS
146



GAMES PLAYED
708
582
449
279
280
208
207
741

Cliff Harris and Adam Vinatieri
COWBOYS;
PATRIOTS and COLTS
TIED WITH 5 GAMES

INTERCEPTIONS
22
25
11
11
6
5
7
14

ROUND	RECEIVING YARDS
1	6,016
2	4,612
3	3,042
4	1,667
5	1,087
6	1,070
7+	973
UFA	2,347

Wes Welker
PATRIOTS and BRONCOS
247

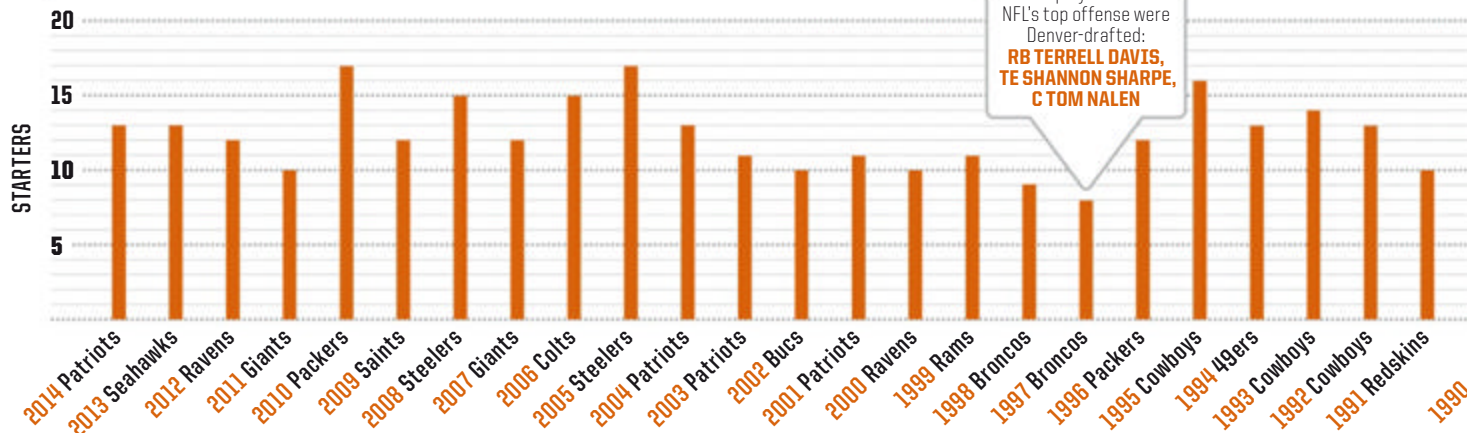


SACKS
37
27
27
16
16
6
6
14½



UFA: Undrafted free agent

INSIDE JOB Starters—out of 22—that each Super Bowl winner drafted itself



SUPER BOWL 50

SCHOOL TIES

Super Bowl totals, by alma mater

	PASSING YDS	RUSHING YDS	RECEIVING YDS	TACKLES	GAMES PLAYED
1 st	1,736 NOTRE DAME	559 USC	770 MIAMI	111 MIAMI	96 USC
2 nd	1,605 MICHIGAN	428 MIAMI	683 USC	101 UCLA	93 MIAMI
3 rd	1,561 STANFORD	418 PENN STATE	589 MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE	97 USC	81 UCLA
4 th	1,156 NORTHERN IOWA	386 TEXAS TECH	564 GEORGIA	81 ALABAMA	76 MICHIGAN
5 th	932 LOUISIANA TECH	382 NOTRE DAME	496 MICHIGAN, MICHIGAN STATE	70 TENNESSEE	76 PENN STATE



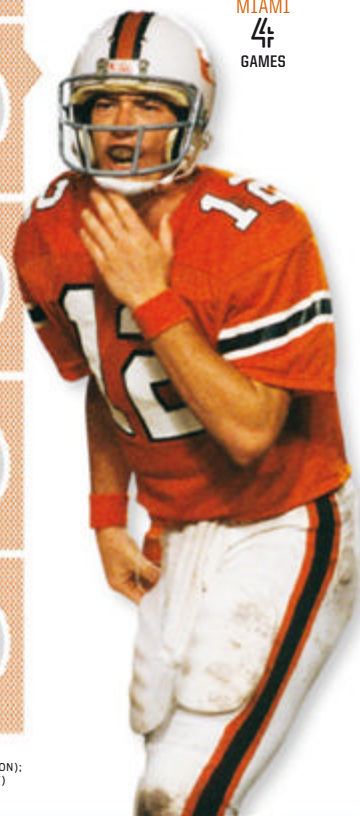
Eugene Robinson
PACKERS and FALCONS
23



Randy Beverly
JETS
2



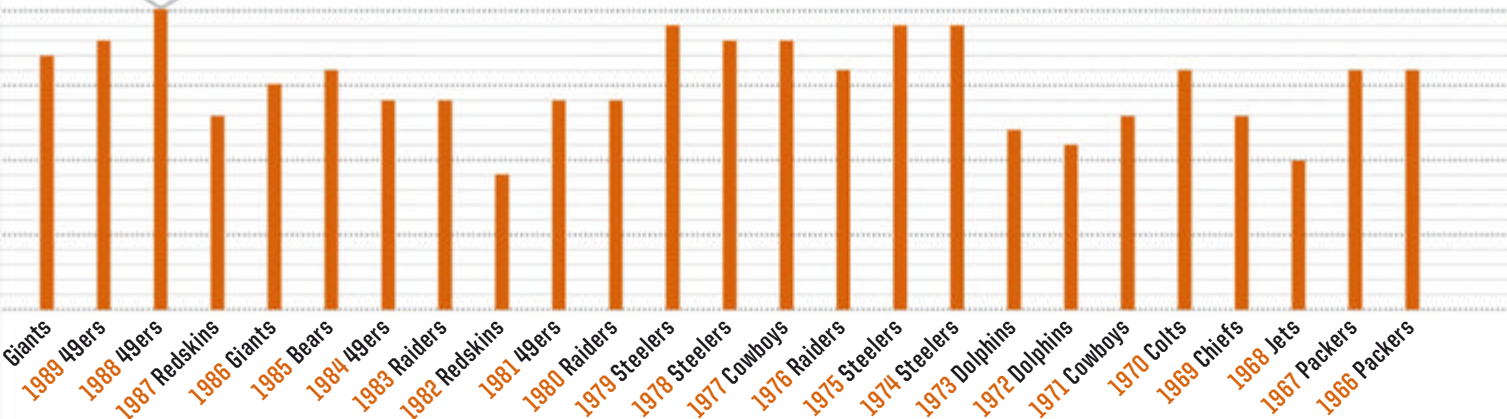
Reggie White
PACKERS
3



Jim Kelly
MIAMI
4
GAMES

AL TIELEMANS FOR SI (BRADY); BOB ROSATO FOR SI (PARKER); JOHN W. McDONOUGH FOR SI (WELKER); MITCHELL LAYTON/GETTY IMAGES (ROBINSON); TONY TOMSIC/GETTY IMAGES (BEVERLY); CHUCK RYDLEWSKI/GETTY IMAGES (WHITE); RONALD C. MODRA/SPORTS IMAGERY/GETTY IMAGES (KELLY)

Most ever—but only two offensive players were 49ers first-rounders, including **WR JERRY RICE**





A Special Day To Be a Dodger

→ BY JIMMY ROLLINS



I ALWAYS THOUGHT it was special to be a black player on the Dodgers. I was even a little envious of those guys, especially on Jackie Robinson Day.

I used to think how awesome it was not only to wear his number 42 on your back but also his team's name across your chest, and how that was something I would love to do one day. Being in Philadelphia for so long—14 full seasons—I didn't think it would ever happen, but it will on April 15. Putting on Jackie's uniform, in my first season with Los Angeles, will be a powerful moment for me.

The Dodgers and Branch Rickey had the courage to not only change baseball but also to help push America into the civil rights era, and Jackie had the courage to not fight back against all the abuse he took. Sometimes I ask myself, *Could I have done that if I were in his shoes?* I'm not sure. I do know that the sacrifices that he made are a significant part of the reason why all African-Americans, and Latin Americans too, can play the game today.

I can't imagine my life without baseball. One of my first memories is of sitting on my dad's shoulders and watching my mother play softball at a field off High Street in Oakland, next to a rock quarry. I don't know if it was the sound of the bat, the movement, the strategy—but it was like *this* is what I want to do. I was about four. Back then in the Bay Area if you weren't playing baseball, you were wasting your time. Everybody played ball, and when I wasn't playing it myself, I was watching the A's, especially Rickey Henderson. Yes, Rickey was a great player, but he was also an entertainer, and I loved that. I'd imitate him stealing a base in my living room, lining up on one couch and sliding into the other.

Jackie Robinson Day is a celebration, but it's also an appropriate occasion to consider why there don't seem to be as many baseball-loving African-American kids, and why there are fewer African-American players in the big leagues than in the past. It's a complex issue, but I have a few ideas. One is that baseball is now a very expensive sport. It didn't used to be that way. You could try out for a team, and all you needed was a glove and cleats. Now, with all these year-round travel teams, parents have to pay for transportation, hotels,

Baseball is stuck in a lot of its old ways—you play the game, shake hands and go in the clubhouse. There isn't much room for the entertainment part of it.



How can baseball increase diversity?

Join the discussion on Twitter by using **#SIPointAfter** and following **@SINow**

lots of gear—and if you can't afford it, they'll move on to someone else who can. That is a big factor. I'd love to see Major League Baseball develop and support more youth baseball leagues that are accessible to everyone.

I believe the way the game is marketed has a lot to do with why black kids are picking other sports, especially football and basketball. Baseball is stuck in a lot of its old ways—you play the game, put your head down, shake hands and go in the clubhouse. There isn't much room for the entertainment part of it. And while other leagues encourage players to do cool commercials and things like that, we don't have the Peyton Mannings doing Nationwide ads or the Chris Pauls doing those spots for State Farm, showing their personalities and senses of humor. I came up in the Derek Jeter era. He was the Man. No one was even close in popularity, and he made shortstop sexy again. But I think baseball relied on him so much that it was a little slow to do some of the progressive things that other leagues were doing. Now that Jeter's gone, who is next? I think the league will have to really push to market many different stars with many different types of personalities to attract different types of kids. You're only going to want to be what you can see.

When I was a rookie, I went to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City and got to speak to Buck O'Neil, who told me stories about all he went through as a player and a manager. I loved that. At that point, I started wearing cropped pants, with high socks, every Sunday as a tribute to the Negro leagues. I did it early in my career, but I haven't for a while. On Jackie Robinson Day, though, I'm planning to wear my pants that way again, in honor of not just Jackie but all the pioneers who made my life in baseball possible. When you see me in high blue socks on Wednesday, you'll know why. □



SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (ISSN 0038-822X) is published weekly, with extra issues in February and August and skipped issues in January, February, April and July, by Time Inc. Principal Office: Time 6 Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020-1393. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40110178. Return undeliverable Canada addresses through the UPM process: GST #896391821RT001. U.S. Subscriptions: \$65 for one year. SUBSCRIBERS: If the postal service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. See DM 7074.12.5. NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to Post Office Box 62121, Tampa, FL 33662-2121. MAILING LIST: We make a portion of our mailing list available to reputable firms. If you would prefer that we not include your name, please call or write us. ©2015 TIME INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. SPORTS ILLUSTRATED IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF TIME INC. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS: For 24/7 service, please use our website: www.SI.com/customerservice. You can also call 1-800-526-5000 or write to SI at P.O. Box 62120, Tampa, FL 33662-2120.

You can't predict what they'll
get into out there, but you can in here.

TEMP₂O™ SHOWER TECHNOLOGY



© 2014 Masco Corporation of Indiana

Take the guesswork out before they get in with Delta® Temp₂O Shower Technology. The water-powered LED display changes color based on your water temperature so you can be confident knowing your family will get the right, safe temperature every time. To learn more, visit deltafaucet.com/temp2o.



